

# Nova Central School District

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## **APPENDIX K**

### **SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS POLICY**

#### **CRISIS INTERVENTION GUIDELINES**

#### ***GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS RESPONDING TO TRAGIC EVENTS***

FEBRUARY 2013

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## I. PREAMBLE

The Nova Central School District is committed to providing support to schools and students affected by tragic events that occur to persons within the school or the larger community. Such crises can have a significant impact on the lives of those affected. Therefore, the importance of providing support during such a crisis is critical. These guidelines have been developed for schools to follow in responding to tragic events.

Tragic events—which constitute a crisis for members of the school community—are generally events such as accidents, deaths, and terminal illnesses. The common element of these events is a profound emotional impact on those close to the situation. In many respects, such traumatic events have an inherent component of profound loss. Consequently, the primary goal of crisis response is to help affected persons work through the grieving process.

Nova Central School District’s *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* distinguishes an event which poses a threat from one which can be traumatic. While a traumatic event can take various forms, the intent herein is to deal with those that are of a tragic nature. Moreover, it is recognized that both a traumatic event and threatening action have the potential to create a confused, chaotic environment. In some cases response protocols established to cover threatening events may include responses to tragedy as well. For direction regarding events that pose threats to safety and wellbeing of students and teachers, please consult the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy (7.19.3)*.

## **II. REGIONAL CRISIS SUPPORT TEAM\***

### **Structure:**

Each Regional Crisis Support Team will consist of a coordinator and at least two other members (e.g. educational psychologists and guidance counsellors) from that respective region. The Senior Education Officer (Student Support Services) will select the members of the team. Crisis situations, as well as regional and district meetings, will be given priority over the routine duties of team members and principals will be expected to arrange for the services of substitute teachers, if necessary.

### **Roles & Functions:**

1. Make contact at least once per year to review crisis intervention procedures, guidelines, policies and for the purposes of professional development;
2. Help provide in-service and resources;
3. Provide support to the School Crisis Team in developing a plan;
4. Provide support in the event of a crisis, if requested by the school;
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of School Crisis Intervention Guidelines following a tragic event.

### **Coordinator Role in the event of a tragedy:**

1. If requested by principal, will contact the SEO (Student Support Services) to keep him/her up-to-date on the crisis. NOTE: the Regional SEO (Programs) will be notified if the SEO (Student Support Services) is unavailable.
2. Will contact the members of the Regional Crisis Support Team who are to be involved and brief them on the details. (Note: In the case of a major crisis, members of other Regional Crisis Support Teams may be needed to assist).
3. Upon arrival at the school (or beforehand), will determine (in consultation with the principal) the responsibilities of the team members.
4. Will discuss all concerns and issues with the principal and relay all information to the team.
5. Will have access to the documents on crisis response that are currently being used by that particular school.
6. Will work cooperatively with the principal in utilizing community resources and personnel.
7. Will identify for the other team members the community resources and personnel that may be available (after consultation with the principal).
8. Will determine the completion of the team involvement at the school (in consultation with the principal).
9. Will debrief the team members after each day and/or at the completion of the crisis intervention.
10. Within a few days of the completion of the Regional Crisis Support Team involvement, will review the handling of the crisis with other team members, and address any unresolved issues.

*\*Refer to page 19 for details on the members of these Regional Crisis Support Teams.*

### III. SCHOOL CRISIS TEAM

#### **Structure:**

The chairperson of the School Team will be the principal or his/her designate.

Other team members will be chosen by the chairperson and may include:

- Guidance counsellor;
- Teacher representatives;
- Parent representative and/or member of local School Council;
- Local Clergy;
- Other members as determined by the team (e.g. student, Public Health Nurse, Social Worker).

Note: Until the formation of a new team, the former members will continue to assume their responsibilities.

#### **Roles And Functions:**

1. Chairperson will identify members of the School Team at the beginning of each school year and send a list to the SEO (Student Support Services) as early as possible in September.
2. Chairperson will ensure the School Crisis Team is familiar with *Crisis Intervention Guidelines*.
3. School Team will familiarize school staff with the print/media resources available at school and district level.
4. School Team will complete action plan/checklist so that all members know details of the crisis action plan. This should be completed and a copy forwarded by the chairperson to the SEO (Student Support Services) before **October 15** of each school year.

#### IV. CRISIS INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN/CHECKLIST

The following is a list of possible actions for the School Crisis Team to consider in responding to a tragic event. This is not an exhaustive list and these items are not listed in order of absolute priority.

#	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETED Yes (Y) No (N)
1	In case of tragedy, call family to offer condolences/support.		
2	Notify other persons directly impacted by the event (eg. homeroom teacher, classmates).		
3	Notify all other school personnel (including support staff).		
4	Communicate event details to students once staff has been notified.		
5	Notify the Director and consult with necessary district personnel as to required resources.		
6	Determine school and class schedules relative to the tragic event.		
7	Identify rooms to be made available for special purposes. Make any necessary adjustments of space/schedules.		
8	Identify students and staff most at risk for significant impact from the tragic event and arrange appropriate interventions.		
9	Determine the need to contact parents of high risk students.		
10	In consultation with family members, church and community leaders, determine the school's involvement in funeral proceedings.		
11	Determine the appropriateness of a memorial service.		
12	Arrange for a follow-up meeting of the School Crisis Team to review events and procedures.		
13.	Arrange for refreshments.		
14.	Demonstrate of respect such as lowering of the flag.		



**VI. COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE**

Role	Name	Contact #
Psychologist		
Hospital		
Local Clergy		
RCMP		
Social Worker		
Public Health Nurse		
Emergency Measures Team Personnel		
<b>Other</b>		



## VII. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR'S CHECKLIST

The school administrator may wish to use the following checklist in the event of a school crisis:

### Collect Information on Tragic Event

- Confirmation/details of event
- Review student file
- Religious/cultural background considerations
- People directly affected (family, close friends, siblings in other schools)
- Emotional status of school
- Wishes of family

### Communicate with Agencies

- RCMP
- Medical Services
- Director of Education
- Transportation System

### Communicate Information to

- SEO (Student Support Services)
- School staff
- Immediate peer group (may need to be told prior to others)
- Student body
- Parents and School Council (if deemed necessary)
- Regional Crisis Support Team (if deemed necessary)

### Means of Communication

- Briefings/meetings
- School address system (PA, Synrevoice)
- Letters (See sample letter, Appendix C)
- Media
  - follow guidelines re media relations (page 12)
  - word statements carefully
  - keep low-key, simple, factual

## Bereavement Responses

- Personal contact with family
- Planning of school participation in funeral (e.g. representatives, choir, readers)
- Donations, flowers, etc.
- Lower flag
- Memorial or tributes (consider appropriateness for long-term)
  - yearbook
  - awards
  - tree planting
- Students and staff in difficulty
  - day of tragedy
  - memorial or funeral day
  - weeks later

## Administrative Matters

- Review upcoming events that may need to be cancelled
- Reschedule events, if deemed necessary
- Attend to individual situations as they arise:
  - lockers, desks, library books, personal property (student's desk/locker and personal belongings may be left until after the funeral, depending on the circumstances)
- Release of personal property
- Remove cumulative record from active files

## Post-Event Concerns

- School Crisis Team
  - debriefing
  - evaluation
- Follow-up
  - staff
  - family
  - Individual staff members, at-risk students referred by Crisis Team (School or Regional), and/or Guidance Counsellor

## VIII. CLOSING SCHOOL

Research shows that by keeping a school open during a tragic event, students get the most help with their emotions through interaction with classmates, teachers, counsellors, etc.

In essence, school should continue with appropriate use of time and facilities.

However, should serious consideration be given to closing a school, please note the following:

- School may be closed due to the death of a member of the staff .
- There is no provision in the School's Act for closing a school in the event of a student death.
- Provision should be made to allow staff members to attend funeral services, if they wish.

WORKING DRAFT

## IX. SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN

(DATE)

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians(s):

We were saddened to learn of the death of \_\_\_\_\_, a classmate of your child, and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to (his/her) family.

This is a particularly difficult time for all of our students and staff. Your child may be deeply affected by this news. Over the next few days you may see any number of behavioural changes, including loss of concentration, physical complaints, or withdrawal.

We are making every effort to support our students at this time. However, we encourage you to contact your child's teacher, our school counsellor or our administrative staff if you have any concerns regarding your child's reaction to this loss.

Sincerely,

Principal

## **x. ADDRESSING THE MEDIA**

The school district must balance cooperation with the media with the privacy of our students and staff. When a crisis occurs, addressing the media may be one of the responsibilities the principal will have to assume, at the request of the Director.

The primary contact person for the media at the district is the Senior Administrative Officer (Corporate Services), who coordinates media relations activities. The Director of Education is the official spokesperson for the district. The SAO (Corporate Services) will work with the Director's office and school administrators/ assistant directors to provide the media with appropriate information and access in a timely manner.

### Media Access

- Requests for interviews and statements should be directed to the SAO (Corporate Services). The SAO will work with the Director and school administration to determine appropriate responses.
- Media representatives (journalists, photographers, videographers) are not permitted on school grounds to interview, photograph or videotape without prior approval.
- Interviews are not to be conducted during school hours or on school property without the approval and presence of a school administrator or his/her designate.
- Consent must be provided by a parent/guardian before any student is photographed, videotaped or interviewed.

## **XI. IDENTIFYING HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS**

A high-risk individual is a person who would be in particular need of counselling and support following a tragic event/crisis. The following is a list of possible high-risk individuals:

- Family Members;
- Other Relatives;
- Close friends;
- Boyfriend/girlfriend;
- Anyone with a history of suicidal behaviour (personal or family);
- Persons at risk of guilt and/or of believing themselves to be responsible;
- Individuals directly involved in the tragic event;
- Individuals who were targets of a threat;
- Any other individuals deemed by the team to be high risk due to particular stresses in their lives (i.e. pregnancy, abuse, exceptional loneliness, other previous trauma, etc.);
- Teachers with extensive involvement with students (e.g. coach, homeroom teacher, etc).

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## XII. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

The following are some issues which might possibly be encountered by the teacher following a tragic event/crisis:

- Denial
- Fear of violence
- Anger
- Depression
- Desire for renewed trust and control

The following strategies may be helpful to the teacher in addressing such issues in the classroom:

### DENIAL

If a student believes the deceased will return:

- do not refute the child's belief
- identify with the feeling by saying, " You must really be missing \_\_\_\_\_ now." or "You must be feeling very lonely."

If a student doesn't want to talk:

- an occasional reminder that the door is open: "Remember, I'm still here if you want to talk."

If a student misbehaves:

- suggest activities that encourage acceptance of the loss:
- arrange a one-on-one session with the student
- help prepare a scrapbook of photos or magazine clippings, reminding the student of the deceased
- Have them create artwork portraying "The way it was and the way it is now." (Include art on home, school, family, holidays, dinner, etc.)

For bewildering emptiness:

- help the student choose a symbol to keep with him/her as a reminder of the deceased.
- record dreams-with pictures/drawings or in a dream diary.

### FEAR OF VIOLENCE

If true of just one student:

- have a counsellor speak to the student

If true of a group of students:

- speak with the class about the following:
  - avoiding unfamiliar people
  - walking together
  - use of designated "safe places"
  - what the community is doing to keep the community safe
  - ways to avoid conflict

## ANGER

For the physical student:

- run around the classroom, the gymnasium, or the school building during Physical Education class
- arm wrestle or compete with others in acceptable ways
- pound a punching bag or pillow
- dance
- hit a baseball/tennis ball

For the creative student:

- finger paint
- knead clay for pottery
- hammer
- build something
- write letters that will never be sent
- compose songs/write poetry

For the verbal student:

- talk to someone
- create stories on tape recorder
- scream in a good place (alone, on the playground, in a closet, driving alone, in the shower, etc.)
- talk out loud as if the person was there
- write letters that are never sent and reread them aloud

## DEPRESSION

- structure the student's assignments so that the student is not overwhelmed
- praise often, even seemingly insignificant positive behaviour
- have the student help someone else
- remind the student of successes and strengths of the past
- help the student organize by writing lists
- give frequent reassurance of hope: "This too shall pass"
- reduce your expectations of the student for a period of time



- ask about suicidal intent (OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS), being particularly attentive to current plans, prior suicidal behaviour, and number of persons available to support this student (Seek counsellor assistance)

## DESIRE FOR RENEWED TRUST AND CONTROL

- read and discuss stories of good overcoming evil
- draw pictures of what happened and how the students wished it had ended
- hold a discussion or draw pictures of what the students would like to have done

## DO.....

- allow the loss to take precedence with classmates
- trust your instincts
- initiate discussion if students don't speak of the loss
- encourage students to attend the funeral and memorial service, if appropriate
- consider the creation of a memorial such as a bulletin board display of pictures and notes, plaque, books for the library, etc.
- realize that not talking about loss doesn't make it go away
- let your genuine concern and caring show
- encourage classmates to be a support system for grieving students and family
- recognize that laughter and play don't mean classmates did not love or care about the person who died
- allow students to express as much of their grief as they are willing to share, and as often as is necessary
- use words like 'died' and 'dead'
- remember the four T's in sympathy: TALK, TOUCH, TEARS, and TIME

## DON'T.....

- be judgemental, give advice or ascribe blame or tell them how they should feel (e.g. "You should be coping better by now.")
- do most of the talking
- lie or tell half-truths
- use euphemisms like 'gone away', 'resting', 'asleep'
- be afraid to admit you don't know all the answers
- avoid the student(s)
- avoid using the deceased person's name
- minimize the loss or look for a moral lesson
- change the subject
- use clichés such as, "Oh well, we all have to die sometime."
- say, "I know how you feel", unless you really do
- believe a child thinks of death the same as an adult
- attempt to become a substitute for the deceased

### **XIII. RESPONDING TO A SUICIDE**

Response to the suicide of a student or staff member may be particularly challenging. If a memorial service is deemed appropriate when someone commits suicide, caution should be taken not to dramatize and glorify the act of suicide, but to focus on the loss. High-risk students could easily begin thinking, in response to a memorial service, "Look how many people would miss me, if I were gone".

Since the fear is that suicidal behaviour may lead to clusters of suicidal behaviour among students, teachers should be alerted to other students who would be high risk at this time.

Peterson & Straub (1991), School Crisis Survival Guide: Management Techniques and Materials for Counselors and Administrators, pp. 148-156.

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#### **XIV. MEMORIAL SERVICES**

The death of someone in our school community can cause a number of mixed feelings: grief, guilt, fear, confusion, etc.

A memorial service may help to alleviate these feelings, as well as give the message that each person is special. It may also help to promote closure and further the grief process.

The following suggestions may be helpful in the planning of such a service:

- The involvement of the parent(s), students, staff, and clergy should be determined;
- It should be held within a week or so of the death;
- Following the service, students and teachers may return to classrooms, or meet informally, to discuss their reactions and feelings.
- Having students spend time with their peers, teachers and counsellors can help to bring closure to the incident and prepare students to resume normal routines;
- The school may also wish to consider tributes or dedications to the deceased (e.g. planting a tree, plaque, yearbook dedication, etc.). This should be done in consultation with the family of the deceased.

WORKING DRAFT

## XV. REGIONAL CONTACTS

### Regional Crisis Support Teams (2012-2013)

Member	Role at District Office	Contact
Linda Webster	Senior Education Officer (Student Support Services)	256-2547 ext: 235 424-5609 (w/c)
Margaret Buffett	Program Specialist (Student Support Services)	256-2547 ext: 233
Patti Winsor	Program Specialist (Student Support Services)	256-2547 ext: 236

### Region 1 Crisis Support Team

Member	School	Contact
Nancy Eaton Coordinator	Indian River High	673-2756/3775 (w) 673-5795 (h) 673-8793 (c)
Kiah Buchanan	Indian River Academy	673-3714 (w) 673-4557 (h)
Ryan White	MSB Regional Academy Cape John Collegiate Hillside Academy Bayview Primary	252-2905 (w) 675-2510 (w) 675-2298 (w) 225-3201 (w)
Tammy Richards	Indian River Academy (Jan-Jun) H.L. Strong Academy	489-4373 (w) 673-3714 (w) 268-3592 (h) 673-8667 (c) 268-2257 (other)
Calvin Whalen	Indian River High Valmont Academy	673-3775 (w) 268-2205 (w) 673-4692 (h) 673-6768 (c)

Member	School	Contact
Christina Pelley	Dorset Collegiate	652-3190 (w)
	Green Bay South Academy	652-3493 (w)
	Brian Peckford Primary	263-2512 (w)
	Long Island Academy	264-3526 (w)
		673-2871 (h)
		673-7043 (c)
Krystal Pardy	Copper Ridge Academy	532-4288 (w)
	St. Peter's Academy	224-5111 (w)

### Region 2 Crisis Support Team

Member	School	Contact
Karen Lewis (Coordinator)	Regional Office	292-5725 (w)
		572-9555 (h)
Janine Taylor-Cutting	Exploits Valley High	489-4374 (w)
		489-0392 (h)
		293-1976 (c)
John Hatt	Exploits Valley Intermediate	489-5608 (w)
		489-0389 (h)
Patricia Shea-Hynes	Woodland Primary	489-4373 (w)
		489-1839 (h)
Paula Hayes	Sprucewood Academy	489-2127 (w)
	Avoca Collegiate	539-2466 (w)
		489-1086 (h)
		293-3145 (c)
Steve Dicks	Millcrest Academy	489-3805 (w)
		489-5927 (h)

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Christian Mckinnon	Memorial Academy	257-2497 (w) 489-0829 (h) 293-0171 (c)
Gloria Cooper	Botwood Collegiate Point Leamington Academy Cottrell's Cove Academy Leading Tickles Primary	257-2497 (w) 484-3432 (w) 485-2410 (w) 483-2580 (w)

### **Region 3 Crisis Support Team**

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Keith Adey Coordinator	Regional Office	292-5727 (w) 489-6481 (h)
Michelle Moore	Leo Burke Academy, Helen Tulk Elementary	258-6337 (w) 258-6472 (w)
Paula Hayes	Lakeside Academy	672-3985 (w) 489-1086 (h) 293-3145 (c)
Gail Jarvis	King Academy John Watkins Academy Victoria Academy St. Peter's All-Grade St. Stephen's All-Grade St. Joseph's Elementary	885-2379 (w) 883-2480 (w) 841-3151 (w) 846-3311 (w) 848-3516 (w) 885-2407 (w) 885-3066 (h) 885-7661 (c)
Lydia Walsh	Bay d'Espoir Academy	882-2500 (w) 538-3088 (h)

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Sharon Stokes	Fitzgerald Academy	888-3426 (w) 256-2547 (w) 651-4947 (h)

### **Region 4 Crisis Support Team**

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Nicole Masters Coordinator	New World Island Academy	629-3241 (w)
Mark Warren	Lewisporte Intermediate	535-2424 535-8280 (Office) 569-2035 (h) 571-9750 (c)
Glenda Ball	Lewisporte Academy Lewisporte Intermediate	535-2424/2115 (w) 535-0058 (h) 541-1711 (c)
Trina Connors	Gander Collegiate	256-2581/2582 (w) 651-2721 (h) 571-0985 (c)
Dianne Hickey	Lewisporte Collegiate Greenwood Academy	535-6929 (w) 261-2360 (w)
Christian McKinnon	Hillview Academy	653-2529 (w) 489-0829 (h) 293-0171 (c)
Sharon Stokes	Fogo Island Central Academy	266-2560 (w) 256-2547 (w) 651-4947 (h)
Anne-Marie Dalley	JM Olds Collegiate Twillingate Island Elementary	884-5931 (w) 884-2871 (w) 884-5946 (h)

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Marina Fudge	Riverwood Academy	676-2009 (w)
	A.R. Scammell Academy	621-3391 (w)
Debra Moore	Phoenix Academy	534-2840 (w)
	Gill Memorial	655-2121 (w)
		256-4722 (h)
Crystal Bower	New World Island Academy	629-3241 (w)
		629-3068 (h)

### **Region 5 Crisis Support Team**

<b>Member</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Christopher Hodder Coordinator	District Office	256-2547 (w)
		256-3990 (h)
		424-6206 (c)
Robert Hiscock	Glovertown Academy	533-2443 (w)
	Charlottetown Primary	664-3301 (w)
	St. Gabriel's All-Grade	669-3331 (w)
	Lumsden Academy	530-2311 (w)
		256-7914 (h)
424-4896 (c)		
Florence Gosse	Glovertown Academy	533-2443 (w)
		677-2120 (w)
	Holy Cross School Complex	533-6017 (h)
		4247793 (c)
Glendene Barrow	Smallwood Academy	674-5336 (w)
		674-0138 (h)
		674-6628 (c)
Lynn Cochrane	Heritage Academy	269-3366 (w)
	Pearson Academy	536-2554 (w)
		536- 2141 (h)
		765-7904 (c)



Member	School	Contact
Stephan Miffen	William Mercer Academy Jane Collins Academy Centreville Academy	537-2184 (w) 537-2188 (w) 678-2833 (w) 533-9451 (h) 424-7552 (c)
Kellie O'Reilly Mercer	Gander Academy	256-8531 (w) 256-8540 (h) 422-4627 (c)
Ron Dawe	Gander Academy	256-8531 (w) 651-3999 (h)
Heather Caines Hamlyn	St. Paul's Intermediate	256-8404 (w) 256-7001 (h) 424-0969 (c)
Kieron Downton	Lakewood Academy	679-2162/5454 (w) 489-5130 (h) 486-0390(c)