

**EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY
TEAM**



Coping with crisis

Handling a traumatic event

Children's Services
0300 123 4043
www.hertsdirect.org



This leaflet outlines the support and services available from the Hertfordshire Educational Psychology/Crisis Team in the event of a death or near fatal accident involving pupils/staff from your school.

It also briefly highlights the major issues schools would need to address.

The team is experienced, trained and skilled in working with schools and young people on managing emotions, positive wellbeing, loss, bereavement and traumatic events using evidence-based practice.

What can we offer?

- Prompt discussion by phone or visit
- Advice to parents, carers, children and young people following the event
- Advice and support to senior management and staff if appropriate
- Support for managers in planning and communicating with others, e.g. press, staff, parents, students, schools and other agencies
- Support for staff in giving and hearing bad news
- Guidance on in-service training on bereavement and a school's response to a traumatic event

What else might we do

- Be present for staff meetings and discussion
- Be present in school when key groups are being informed
- Attend special assemblies
- Support grieving adults and children in school
- Be part of wider strategic planning meetings/rapid response meetings
- Support groups of students in managing their emotions
- Meet with and support concerned staff
- Advise staff on referring to other key health agencies and support services

- Advise on re-integration into school, funerals, special assemblies, tributes
- Outline the grieving process
- Seek to work with school staff and other agencies who work directly with students

After the event

Traumatised schools, pupils and staff have often been at a loss as to how to deal with the aftermath of a crisis.

Short term

Feeling shocked and numbed or feeling a strong urge to talk are normal reactions of those thrown into a major crisis. Ensure adults and pupils have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings with each other.

- Arrange briefing meeting for all staff.
- Arrange de-briefing meeting for directly affected staff.
- Inform affected pupils in an appropriate and careful way.
- Inform parents as appropriate with care and sensitivity.
- Attempt to maintain normal school routines.
- Inform governors and the local authority (CSF).
- Make plans for attendance at the funeral/s.
- Check procedures for monitoring staff and pupils are in place.
- Contact families of those hurt or bereaved and express sympathy.
- Identify vulnerable staff and pupils and ensure they are advised of available support services.

Medium term

Whilst schools will want to maintain as normal a routine as possible, some changes are inevitable.

- Ensure a member of staff contacts children at home or in hospital if appropriate.
- Make sensitive arrangements for the pupil's return to school.
- Arrange alternative teaching if necessary.
- Arrange support for affected staff.
- If necessary arrange consultation with school educational psychologist so that staff can better support pupils.
- Clarify procedures and refer pupils for individual help, such as counselling if appropriate.
- Keep parents updated and informed.
- Decide about attendance at funerals.
- Share planning of special assembly/memorials.

Long term

In some cases the effects of a crisis can last for years, both within the school and the local community.

- Introduce support systems to continue monitoring vulnerable pupils and staff.
- Consult and decide on whether and how to mark anniversaries.
- Allow time to talk about the crisis.
- Ensure new staff are aware of pupils affected and are sensitive to their needs.
- Ensure pupils and staff know how to obtain further help if necessary.
- Remember legal processes, enquiries and even news stories may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset in school.

After the event schools/settings need to address developing a contingency plan

School management teams and governors should develop a plan that involves the following steps:

- Identifying potential critical incidents and safeguarding staff and pupils
- Identifying support agencies and key contacts
- Develop a school critical incident management plan
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for all staff
- The setting up of a multi-agency team around the crisis may be helpful

When a crisis occurs the first task is to obtain accurate information and relay it to senior management within the school. Uncertainty breeds rumour, which adds to distress.

- Ensure accurate transfer of information and that an open link to the school is maintained
- Ensure key staff have access to next-of-kin lists
- Set up a system for dealing with enquiries from community and press via the Hertfordshire County Council press office
- Decide which member of staff will deal with the media following Hertfordshire County Council policy and guidance

Consider the curriculum

Children and young people should not ideally have to deal with issues of death, bereavement or trauma without some preparation. Such issues should be an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils need opportunities to discuss and consider these issues from time to time.

- Set up support systems for teachers/adults working with painful emotions and sensitive subjects

- Allow time and space for additional pastoral support for pupils if needed
- Be aware of multi-cultural and multi-faith issues
- Monitor the wellbeing of staff and pupils

How can the Hertfordshire Educational Psychology/Crisis Team be contacted in the event of a crisis?

In the first instance, please contact the Educational Psychology Team in your local double district area:

Your information will be recorded and passed to a member of the Hertfordshire Educational Psychology/Crisis Team who will return your call within 24 hours.

Source:

Wise before the event, coping with crises in schools: "W Yule and A Gold"



If you would like help and advice about the information in this leaflet, or if you require the information in another format such as large print, Braille or on audiotape, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043.

You can also contact us by email at hertsdirect@hertscc.gov.uk

If you require help to translate this information, please phone 0300 123 4043.

Bengali: বাংলা, ভাষায় তথ্যাবলীর জন্য অথবা আপনার একজন দোভাষী অর্থাৎ ইন্টারপ্রিটরের দরকার হলে, অনুগ্রহ করে উপরে যে সব টেলিফোন নম্বর দেওয়া হয়েছে সেগুলোতে ফোন করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Chinese: 如果需要漢語版本，或需要口譯人員，請用上述號碼聯繫。

Italian: Per informazioni in italiano, o se desidera l'aiuto di un'interprete, contatti i numeri elencati in precedenza.

Portuguese: Para informações em português ou se precisar de uma interprete é favor telefonar para um dos números acima.

Punjabi: ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਏ ਹਿਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਏ ਲਈ ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੀਟਰ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਖ਼ਿਆ ਕਰਕੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨੰਬਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Turkish: Sağlanan hizmetlerle ilgili bilgileri Türkçe, istiyorsanız ya da bu dillerden gevirmene gereksinim duyarsanız, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numaralarını arayınız.

Urdu: اردو میں معلومات کے لئے، یا اگر آپ کو ایک انٹرپریٹر کی ضرورت ہے، تو براہ مہربانی اوپر دیئے ہوئے نمبروں پر رابطہ کریں۔

Hertfordshire County Council – making Hertfordshire a better place to live by providing:

Care for older people

Support for schools, pupils and parents

Support for carers

Fire and rescue

Fostering and adoption

Support for people with disabilities

Libraries

Admission to schools

Road maintenance and safety

Protection for adults and children at risk

Trading standards and consumer protection

Household waste recycling centres

These are only some of our services.

Find out more at www.hertsdirect.org

August 2011

CSFPUB 0146 Issue 2

Design Ref: 062442a