Overview

The purpose of this manual is to provide building counselors a quick reference guide to use in a crisis. It is the Tucson Unified School District's philosophy that a pre-planned and organized approach is more effective in reducing psychological and social difficulties following a crisis in a school.

This Counselor Crisis Response Guide includes procedures that were designed to deal with a number of crises that could occur in the district. These procedures do not cover every condition that might develop, and it may not always be possible to follow every procedural step. This manual can be used in conjunction with your building emergency plans. The crisis team members collaborate with the TUSD School Safety and Risk Management Departments as needed. Contact Warren Allison, School Safety at 584-7676 or Lauren Elb, Risk Management at 225-4670. Additional resources are available at http://instech.tusd.k12.az.us/counseling/crisis.asp.

Crisis Team Organization

The school counselors in the Tucson Unified School District are members of the crisis teams. Under the direction of the principal, the crisis team members assist in classrooms and provide small group counseling. The counselors on the crisis teams have received training through professional development. The team members work with the school principal in implementing a school plan to follow. A bilingual counselor will be available, if needed.

Utilizing the Crisis Response Team

The Counselor Crisis Response Team provides a supportive service that can help schools assess, plan and intervene in crises affecting staff and students. A pre-planned, organized approach has been shown to be effective in reducing the emotional and social impact of a crisis. The Tucson Unified School District Crisis Response Teams have had specialized training to assist building administrators in directing crisis resolution activities.

Procedure to activate the Crisis Team:

1. All principals contact the crisis contact person, Holly Colonna at 225-6211 (w), 578-2894 (h), 909-4264 (cell) or Karen Ward at 225-6211 (w), 326-4991 (h), 490-1994 (cell). The appropriate level of response will be determined.
2. The counselor crisis contact person will call the Crisis Team Manager.
3. The counselor crisis contact person will call the other members of the team to give them directions for the crisis.

Crisis Response Team Services

Meet with building administrators and key staff to formulate an action plan.
Facilitate staff meeting to provide information related to the crisis.
Support school staff.
Help teachers process information with students.
Work with students individually or in groups.
Be available for contact with parents.
Provide helpful, factual information for the school community.
Collaboration

Crisis teams work in collaboration with other groups depending on the crisis situation. These include but are not limited to TUSD School Safety, TUSD Risk Management, local social service and health agencies, and local first responders.

News/Media Procedures for Administrators

The only means to inform the general public is by mass media; therefore, it is important to ensure that the media receive prompt, accurate information. Isolated quotes from individuals can be incomplete or misleading and should be avoided.

After calling appropriate emergency personnel and following safety procedures:

- Notify your administrative supervisor.
- Refer media contact to the Communications and Media Relations Department 225-6437.
- Inform office staff of the situation and how to handle phone inquiries. (Assign bilingual staff members to office when appropriate.)

Recommendations for Administrators regarding Student/Staff Death

Immediate actions to be taken by building administrator(s):

- Obtain verification of the death(s).
- Notify your administrative supervisor.
- Notify crisis team, Holly Colonna at 225-6211 (w), 578-2894 (h), 909-4264 (cell) or Karen Ward at 225-6211 (w), 326-4991 (h), 490-1994 (cell)
- Decide on time/place for a staff meeting.
- Notify all school staff members.
- Alert all staff that they do not talk to the media.
- Ensure that students aren’t exposed to media inquiries.

Follow through actions to be taken by building administrator(s) in conjunction with the crisis team:

- Update information concerning the death(s).
- Develop a plan for the day.
- Meet with all building staff.
- Inform students.
- Plan for subs if needed.
- Notify other schools affected.
- Identify students/staff most affected.
- Prepare a letter to send home to parents – review proposed letter with Communications Dept.
Potential Suicide Checklist

Suicide threats must always be taken seriously and intervention should be immediate. If a situation is potentially life threatening, students and staff need to recognize that the issue of confidentiality does not apply.

**What to do**

- ____ Do not leave the individual alone.
- ____ Refer the individual to appropriate staff (administrator, counselor) who will do the following:

**Assess the degree of risk**

- ____ Ask student directly if he/she is thinking of suicide.
- ____ Is there a plan and how specific is it?
- ____ How lethal is the method?
- ____ How available is the means?
- ____ Has there been a previous attempt?
- ____ Ask about feelings of anger and depression (crying, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, hopelessness.)
- ____ Ask about losses (deaths, family changes, peer relationships.)
- ____ Ask about history of chemical use.
- ____ Ask whether the student has made final arrangements (giving away possessions, saying good-bye.)

**Intervention Plan**

- ____ Contact student’s parent(s) or guardian(s) and plan with them how to help the student.
- ____ Police and/or Child Protective Services may need to be involved if parents are unable or unwilling to help.
- ____ Refer parent(s) or guardian(s) to appropriate services from physicians, mental health professionals and/or community agencies.
- ____ Police involvement may be required in situations where the student is assessed to be in immediate danger and parents cannot be located or are unable to help. The Tucson Police Department assists in transporting students to an appropriate mental health facility for evaluation. (School personnel should avoid transporting student in private vehicles.)

**Follow up**

- ____ Complete the suicide checklist form when available.
- ____ Check to be sure that the student has received (is receiving) appropriate services.
- ____ Plan for student’s transition back to school.
- ____ Student should have ongoing contact with a counselor.
- ____ Brief appropriate staff on student’s status.
TUSD School Counseling Department:  225-6211

TUSD School Safety:  584-7676

TUSD Risk Management:  225-4670

Child Protective Services:  888-767-2445

All other Tucson Area Community Resources are available at:

www.az211.gov