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A School Crisis Intervention Plan

A Sample Copy for the Course

COUN 631: Introduction to School Counseling

Mercer University/Atlanta

Crisis Plan

Introduction

When parents and guardians send their children off to school in the morning, they do so with the expectation that their kids will be well taken care of and protected in the school environment. It is the duty of educators, administrators, and all other faculty and staff in the school setting to assume parental responsibilities while others' children are entrusted in their care. Children are monitored to make sure they eat their lunches, do their work, play well with others, and get on the bus to go home. But what is the faculty supposed to do when a classmate or teacher is killed in a car crash or commits suicide?

Crisis management plans should be available to all schools in case of unfortunate and unexpected events. These plans can be used during these times to help keep the school personnel calm and collected by assigning everyone specific roles and duties, as well as providing step-by-step procedures to follow. The sense of control gained by the adults through use of crisis management plans will filter to the students, allowing them to come to school knowing there are people to help them deal with their emotions and watch out for them if something goes horribly wrong.

When it comes to dealing with a crisis the best motto to have and adhere to is to always be prepared. Having a Crisis Plan in place can alleviate much stress and many problems if and when a disaster occurs. Hoping for the best but planning for the worst helps ensure things go a little smoother when the inevitable happens.

Crisis Team:

The crisis team is trained in intervention procedures. Team members include: Principal, assistant principal, teachers and counselors. The team members' responsibilities consist of

developing and implementing prevention and intervention procedures. The team will disseminate information to students, staff and community on various crisis areas. Frequent training will be provided for all faculty and staff to ensure effective crisis management. Practice drills addressing areas such as what to do in case of a fire, hurricane, tornado, or threat will be implemented during these trainings.

a. Principal's role

The Principal will coordinate and supervise emergency management activities within the school. He/She will have the responsibility to:

- Develop a comprehensive school emergency management plan.
- Designate and train a school crisis team.
- Monitor development of situations such as weather conditions or incidences within the community that impact the school.
- Implement evacuation procedures and measures to control access to affected area.
- Coordinate the use of alternative sheltering for major emergencies occurring within the county.
- Convene scheduled and emergency team meetings.
- Oversee broad and specific team functions.
- Ensure that the required resources are available to each team member for assigned duties.
- Establishes, coordinates, and initiates the telephone tree when school is not in session to contact the crisis team and general school staff, including itinerant, part-time and paraprofessionals.

- Establishes a plan to rapidly disseminate relevant information to all staff during regular school hours.
- Prepares statements to disseminate to staff, students, parents, the community, and the media.
- Maintains ongoing contact with police, emergency services, and hospital representatives
- Develops and implements plans for crowd management and movement during crisis, including any required evacuation plans and security measures.

b. Assistant Principal's role

- Establish procedure for assessing and reporting the status of students during an emergency or any event that results in the evacuation or relocation of students.
- Provide instruction and practice to all faculty and staff regarding student assessment and evaluation of crisis situation.
- Place reporting forms throughout school, including one in each classroom.
- Retrieve reports from all teachers on the status and location of every student involved in the crisis.
- Use investigative procedures for reporting any students injured, ill or missing.
- Arrange for completion of release procedures.

c. School Counselor's role

- Contact family to inform them of any incidence involving their student.
- Determine the extent of counseling services needed, mobilize community resources, and oversee the mental health services provided to students.

- Work with parents/guardians, student, administrators, and teachers to monitor and reassess student regularly.
- Complete/review and file confidential incident report.
- Continue to counsel and observe the student, documenting observations until situation is calm.
- Consult with school resource officer as needed regarding legal incidences involving students.
- Develop mechanisms for ongoing training of crisis team members and other school staff.
- Identify and establish liaisons with community resources for staff and student counseling.

d. Teacher's role

- Keep students calm, maintain order while in evacuation area, and check class roster.
- Close classroom door and turn out lights.
- Complete confidential incident report of those involved in crisis plan.
- If necessary, assist in loading and monitoring students to alternative site.
- Advise the Principal if any student is missing

e. Roles of other service personnel (nurse, school psychologist, etc)

School nurse:

- Administer first aid in necessary.
- Complete incident report.
- Close door and turn out lights when leaving clinic.

School Psychologist:

- Evaluate if incident indicates other emotional or psychological problems.
- Facilitate or refer student and parents/guardians for appropriate treatment within school policy guidelines.

School Custodian/Maintenance:

- Inventory all hazardous materials.
- Identify areas that are hazardous or contaminated. Create procedures for isolating these areas.
- Distribute supplies to student evacuation areas.
- Search the affected sections of the school for students or staff that may be at risk.

School Secretary:

- Establish internal emergency communications such as PA systems and two-way radio communications.
- Maintain communication with school administration and Superintendent.
- Take appropriate action by notifying medical or search teams by utilizing 9-1-1 services.
- Conducts all direct in-house communications.
- Screens incoming calls.
- Maintains a log of telephone calls related to the crisis event.

Crisis Response Plan:

A. Terrorism

Terrorism is defined as systematic use of violence, terror, and intimidation to achieve a goal. Examples of terrorism that can occur at schools are kidnapping/hostage situation, sniper

attach, armed intruder, bomb threat, etc. A terrorist act can occur at any time at schools. It is appropriate that schools take immediate action in each case to provide for the safety of students, staff, and facilities. In the event that a terrorist attack occurs on school grounds or a terrorist enters the school building, the following steps should be taken to ensure safety to everyone:

- Principals or Assistant Principal will announce over the intercom or some form of communication system, LOCK DOWN.
- School Principal or Assistant Principal will immediately call 911 and notify proper law enforcement authority and school superintendent.
- All outside doors must be secured and all students must be in classrooms or trailers.
- Move any outdoor classes (P.E., recess, etc.) to safe area.
- Indoor classes will close and lock windows and doors; turn off lights; cover the glass on the doors; stay quiet.
- Teachers will make sure there are not any students in the hallways.
- Teachers or paraprofessionals will be responsible for taking roll to make sure no students are missing.
- Teachers are to remain with their students at all times.
- Teachers do not need to call the front office to find out the status of the situation at any time during the lockdown.
- Teachers should wait to receive further instructions from the principal.

B. Illness

- Injury, and/or Illness
 - Secretary is responsible for calling 911 immediately.

- The notification process will begin if indicated as needed by administrators and law enforcement.
 - Names of victims should not be used on radios and walkie talkies.
 - The school counselor and/or the school social worker will be responsible for alerting family members who are employed within the school system.
 - Staff that is qualified should administer first aid to students involved.
 - School administrators are responsible for keeping a record of the employees that are certified in CPR and First Aid.
 - Administrators are to alert these personnel when these services are needed.
 - Other personnel will be alerted to replace these vacated positions.
 - Evacuation procedures are to be used when needed. This is decided by administrators.
 - Lockdown procedures are to be used when needed. This is decided by administrators.
 - Do not interrupt a potential crime, except when first aid assistance is needed.
 - The need for medical intervention is takes precedence over potential crime scene disturbance.
 - The law enforcement is responsible for crime scene management.
 - The two designated first responders are the Principal and the designated law enforcement officer.
 - The school counselor and social worker are responsible for implementing the Crisis Plan.
- Accident/Emergency Procedures

- Fire
 - The school will be evacuated in an orderly fashion when the alarm is sounded.
 - The secretary calls 911 and the superintendent's office.
 - Use alternate exits if the primary escape route is blocked.
 - Teacher should take their roll books. Teachers should take role upon arriving in their designated area.
 - Teacher should check restrooms and other empty rooms for students that were left behind.
 - Do not lock any doors upon exiting.
 - Assemble in an assigned location. Avoid using parking lots where emergency vehicles may need to park
 - Custodians will turn off the power when a fire is verified.
 - The school counselor and social worker are responsible for implementing the Crisis Plan.
- Transportation Accidents
 - The bus driver is in charge of monitoring students on the bus and for calling the transportation office.
 - The assigned person at the transportation office is to call 911 for assistance, notify school personnel, and contact the superintendent's office

- School administrators will go to the scene and compile a list of students on board. This person and the driver will identify the students with injuries. Administrators will then report to the hospital to assist families.
- The Transportation Department is responsible for transporting students from the scene.
- The Transportation Department is responsible for notifying parents. This is per their protocol.
- The driver of the vehicle involved in the accident will be drug tested.

C. Violence

- Intent
 - Incidences involving violence can be described as those that involve threats to injure students, personnel, and/or the facilities. These threats will necessitate instantaneous and efficient responses.
- Involvement of Other Agencies
 - This school system has numerous agreements with the counties' agencies, including police, fire departments, and mental health agencies. The agreements made in connection with these agencies outline the services provided with each agency.
- Response to Warning Signs
 - These signs indicate that a student is about to behave in a manner that could be a danger to themselves and others.
 - These warning signs require immediate attention.

- These signs are typically identified by a series of unconcealed, severe, and aggressive behaviors. These behaviors are frequently directed towards the facility and fellow students.
- Warning signs
 - Severe physical altercations with peers and/or others.
 - Destruction of property.
 - Serious outbursts of temper with little or no provocation.
 - Any threat of lethal violence.
 - The possession of a lethal weapon such as a firearm or knife.
- Action: When presented with signs that violence may erupt, safety is the foremost concern to school officials. Action will be taken swiftly. The intervention of school officials and law enforcement agencies is necessitated in the following cases:
 - The child has a set plan to injure others. This plan includes the time, place, and method to cause harm to others.
 - The child is in possession of a lethal weapon.
 - Parents should be notified immediately when concerns are brought up about their child.
 - This school community must search for guidance from the Department of Family and Children Services and a community mental health center.

Specific Protocols for School Violence:

- For students who hear of a possible threat of violence:

- Report the threat to an adult (parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, or a law enforcement officer. Parents should also be informed that they should report any threat to school officials.
- Cooperate with officials. The information will remain confidential to the highest possible extent. Parents should be notified of this policy.
- For school staff who hear of a possible threat of violence:
 - Report any threat to your immediate supervisor.
 - Cooperate with officials. The information will remain confidential to the highest possible extent.
- For school administrators who hear of a possible threat of violence:
 - Remove the student responsible for making threats from the classroom and take student to a secure area.
 - Notify a designated law enforcement officer.
 - Notify the staff member that reported the threat that there must be an immediate written record.

This violence assessment protocol should be frequently monitored for effectiveness. Changes should be made when necessary to ensure school safety.

Fights:

- Do not run to the scene of the fight.
- Seek help on the way to the incident.
- Look for any weapons.
- Use crowd control; scatter any onlookers.
- Separate the fighters.

- Attempt to avoid using physical contact.
- Take the members of the altercation to neutral locations.
- Collect the student's school identification.
- Seek medical attention, if needed.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the incident in writing.
- Provide counseling services for as long as needed.

Should an act of violence occur, the school is to follow the emergency lockdown procedure.

Lockdown Procedure

- The principal will announce that a lockdown is in effect.
- A designated secretary will call 911.
- All students are to remain in class.
- Students in the hall are to report to their classroom.
- Teachers should lock their classroom doors.
- No one should leave the room until an announcement is made.
- If a class change is in effect students should report to class immediately. Teacher should lock the door immediately after the arrival of the students.
- If students are at lunch they are to report to the cafeteria.
- Evacuations should only be made following an announcement from the principal.
- Teachers should tell students that they do know what the emergency is.
- Students should be in an area as far away from the windows and doors as possible.

Interventions to Ensure Effective Action during a Crisis Involving Violence

- Evacuation procedures should be posted so that all staff knows what to do. Students and teachers should use the lockdown procedure as a guide.

- Everyone should know their role in the crisis plan and know what means will be used to communication. The school intercom system is the primary means.
- The staff will be provided in-service training to explain the plan.

Responding to Incidents of Violence

- Be familiar with how different people act in response to death and loss. Take into account developmental issues, religion, and cultural considerations.
- Professionals at the school and in the community will be involved in the assisting individuals that are affected by the situation.
- Parents should be aided in understanding typical responses to violence. These include: the inability to sleep, distraction, and physical illness.
- Teachers and other school staff members should be assisted in coping with the aftermath of violence. These teachers will undergo a debriefing. Grief counseling will be made available to members of staff.

D. Natural disasters

Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms are a frequent occurrence in Georgia. They are often accompanied by lightning, damaging winds in excess of 50mph and hail. Quite often a thunderstorm is a prelude to a tornado.

If available the school should be on a warning system coordinated with local Emergency Management. These are some actions that the school should take during a severe thunderstorm:

- Be dismissed early before anticipated storm becomes severe.
- Be provided with emergency transportation

- Be kept at school under supervision in protected area until storm passes, walking is safe or transportation is provided.

Tornados

Tornados are local storms with whirling winds of tremendous speeds that can exceed several hundred miles per hour. These storms are generally small and short-lived but are the most violent. Georgia is in one of the principal area of tornado frequency and every school must also be prepared to take emergency action when threatened by one of these storms.

- Advise teachers and staff through the intercom, PA system or by walkie talkies to announce that a tornado watch is in effect.
- Advise teachers to review with their students the duck and cover command.
- Teachers should also remind students to move in a single file line.
- Instruct the staff to prop open vents and doors between classrooms and hallways.
- Open all windows slightly
- Move students from all temporary or mobile classrooms.
- If there is enough time, check all restrooms for students, staff, or visitors.
- Teachers should take their roll book and take attendance once in protected area.
- Staff and students will remain in the drop and tuck position until the storm passes or a clear signal is given.
- Practice tornado drills should be conducted frequently to familiarize everyone.
- Make sure a plan is in place for special needs students and staff.
- Have an alternative plan of communication in case of power outage.
- Teachers and staff should secure all doors in the building.

Flooding

- Make provisions for students living in affected area to be sent home early
- Make provisions for students to be sent home of relatives.
- Make provisions for students to be sent to homes near school
- Notify parents via radio, T.V. or phone
- Notify bus drivers for early or late dismissal
- Keep students at school or transport to other evacuation points.

E. Suicide Threat

This type of behavior require immediate attention if a staff member has a reason to believe a student may be suicidal or is a threat to others the following procedures must be followed:

- It should be assumed that the threat is serious.
- Immediately report concerns to principal, assistant principal, counselor law.
- Notify students' parents or guardian
- The administrator should remove the student from the classroom and place them in a secure area where he or she can be monitored.
- The child should be referred to an appropriate agency
- The counselor should talk with the student to find his or her thoughts or feelings for wanting to die. The counselor should talk with the student to ask the student if he or she have a plan. The counselor should tell the student that he or she must report this information because of your concern of their safety.

F. Sudden death of student or teacher

In the event that a staff member, teacher, or student, incurs a sudden death:

- School principal, administrators, and superintendent should be notified at once.

- Emergency personnel should be notified by calling 911.
- Hold a faculty meeting as soon as possible to review procedures for the day, availability of support services.
- Tell the truth to the class before telling the whole school.
- Allow a break time after telling the news or discussing the death.
- The next day, focus on students' feelings.
- Refer any student to counselor if observe any major changes in behavior
- Make arrangements for funeral attendance, flower arrangements, or donations.

General Procedural Checklist

- Direct staff and others not to repeat information until verification is obtained.
- Notify superintendent.
- Convene Crisis Response Team and assign duties.
- Notify building support staff, such as counselors, psychologist, and social workers.
- Inform close friends of the affected student and provide support.
- Prepare formal statement or announcement.
- Announce time and place of emergency staff meeting.
- Identify other/additional students, staff, and parents likely to be most affected by news.
- Assess need for additional community resources.
- Assign trained staff or community professionals to:
 - provide grief support to students;
 - review and distribute guidelines for classroom discussion to teachers;
 - stand in for absent/affected/substitute teacher; and
 - distribute lists of community resources.

- Make official announcement.
- Hold emergency staff meeting.
- As needed, assign team members and other staff to monitor grounds, notify parents, support staff, etc.

Press Release Guidelines

Some general things to consider when dealing with the media during a crisis are as follows:

- ✓ Have a certain person already trained to be the media spokesperson for each school or district.
- ✓ Have a media policy in place that clarifies what the media will and will not be allowed to do.
- ✓ Ensure all school staff know the media procedures prior to a crisis.
- ✓ Designate a certain room to receive media representatives. The central office may be the best location.
- ✓ Provide a written statement supporting and clarifying verbal statements.
- ✓ Obtain parent permission prior to releasing any student photographs.
- ✓ In events involving specific students, ensure parents have been notified before releasing names.

Summary

Every school should have copies of a school emergency or crisis plan available in place emergencies occur. An emergency or crisis plan is helpful because it serves as a guidebook for educators to follow to ensure everyone in the school is protected. Many disasters could occur while at school and therefore it is very important for educators to prepare; it is better to be proactive than reactive. The protection of students, staff, and administrative demands a

collaborative effort through various roles by the school principal, assistant principal, school counselors, teachers, and other service personnel.

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