

# 1001 CRISIS RESPONSE

## I. PURPOSE

Traumatic events, emergency situations and other crisis-related concerns affecting school-age children and adolescents have increased dramatically over the past decade. Communities and educational systems are increasingly challenged to identify and respond to crisis situations.

Crisis situations include natural disasters, acts of violence, death or injury due to accidents, suicide or life threatening illness. Traumatic events upset and disorganize the normal flow in any system. These events can powerfully affect people involved because the events are characterized by significant loss of control, unpredictability and emotional trauma. An organized plan for action in the event of a crisis can better prepare and enable those involved to deal with the situation.

Schools touch the lives of most children, adolescents and families living in a community. Schools can be a unifying leadership force in response to crisis situations. With these considerations in mind, the following guidelines have been developed to coordinate the school's response to crisis situations.

## II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. The superintendent or designee will initiate the school's response to the crisis situation until the Crisis Team can convene to continue the response and monitor the school district's implementation of its crisis procedures.

1. Members of the Crisis Team will include:

- a. Superintendent
- b. high school and elementary principals
- c. school social worker
- d. school counselor
- e. law enforcement officer
- f. clergy
- g. parent representatives
- h. student council president
- i. school nurse
- j. high school teacher

k. elementary teacher

l. principals' secretaries

m. Cabinet members in time of crisis

2. The Superintendent of schools will be responsible for appointing all representatives to the Crisis Team.

3. Persons on the Crisis Team will be identified by an official badge when acting as a Crisis Team member.

4. The Superintendent of Schools (or designee) will be the chair of the Crisis Team.

B. In the event of a crisis, the member of the Crisis Team who initially verifies the event will contact the Superintendent of Schools or one of the school principals.

1. A telephone tree will be initiated to inform members of the Crisis Team of the crisis situation and to designate a central meeting place and time.

2. The Crisis Team will meet as soon as possible once they have been informed that a potential crisis event has been identified.

3. The Crisis Team will determine if a crisis exists which warrants implementation of the crisis procedures, develop a plan of action, address issues of concern and delegate responsibilities outlined below to appropriate members of the team.

C. Team responsibilities include:

1. The Crisis Team needs to communicate accurate information regarding the crisis situation in as timely a manner as possible to discourage the spread of rumors. It is also essential to consider the privacy and feelings of family members involved in a sensitive and respectful manner.

Communication may include:

a. establishment of a telephone tree to inform teachers and staff of the event;

b. in conjunction with the building principal, scheduling a before-school meeting with teachers to discuss strategy for handling the crisis situation;

c. in conjunction with the building principal, scheduling an after-school meeting with teachers to monitor the day's progress and discuss any concerns;

d. issuing a written document to be read to all students as soon as possible in their classes regarding the crisis event;

e. the superintendent or designee are the official spokespersons and will respond to the media;

f. designating the clergy representative to communicate with the family regarding release of any

information about their child to the media, funeral arrangements, memorials, etc.;

g. designating the law enforcement representative to coordinate with community crisis management efforts should there be any.

2. The Crisis Team will establish a crisis room for students and staff.

a. Announcements will be made to students/staff that a crisis room and support persons are available.

b. Personnel will be designated to monitor the halls and guide students to the crisis room who might need support.

c. Crisis Team members will maintain an awareness that the crisis may trigger similar responses in others; i.e., in the case of suicide.

d. Consideration will be given to obtaining outside counseling resources, if needed.

3. The Crisis Team will monitor classroom activities,

a. A person will be designated to attend all the classes of the deceased to respond to student concerns. (If the deceased is a teacher, someone should visit with his/her students to respond to their concerns.)

b. The principal (or designee) is designated to collect the deceased's belongings (i.e., locker contents, Physical Education clothes, artwork, schoolwork, etc.) and give them to the family at an appropriate time.

c. The building principal will designate a person to develop lesson plans covering personal loss issue will be made available to teaching staff in times of crisis.

4. Activities in response to the crisis will be documented. The Crisis Team will meet during and after the crisis even to evaluate the school's response and crisis procedures.

5. The Crisis Team will meet at least once per year to evaluate the district's Crisis Response Procedures and the district's response to any crisis event that may have occurred. The Superintendent of Schools (or designee) will be responsible for calling these meetings.

D. The Superintendent will make the decision to cancel school and/or school activities.

Cross References:

Dover-Eyota Public Schools Policy 806 (Crisis Management Policy)