



Bruce-Grey Catholic
District School Board

CRISIS RESPONSE IN A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

SUPPORT GUIDELINES

God is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything ... let your requests be made known to God. Then the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:5-7

RATIONALE/GOALS OF THE DOCUMENT

1. To acknowledge the trauma that is involved in a Catholic school community at a time of crisis.
2. To assist principals and staff in responding to the crisis.
3. To provide appropriate responses that meet the needs of students and staff following a death.
4. To assist in understanding the grief process, and in accepting grief as normal and expected.
5. To help reconcile experiences of death within the context of Christian faith and hope.

SOME THOUGHTS ON CHILDREN AND GRIEF

All children to go through their own grief response.

1. *Shock and Denial* - "It can't be true."
2. *Physical Symptoms* - "I feel sick."
3. *Anger* - "Why did God let this happen?"
4. *Guilt* - "Why did I ---?" or "Why didn't I ---?"
5. *Jealousy* - "How come Johnny's father is still alive?"
6. *Anxiety & Fear* - "If you died too, who would take care of me?"
7. *Sadness & Loneliness* - "Can't my brother come back? I miss him. I want to play with him."

There is no single way for children to grieve. Just provide the environment in which emotions can be shared freely. If more than one student is involved, someone should spend undistracted time with each alone.

THE PRINCIPAL

Given that you will be caught up in the grief of the crisis, reflect on your own state of mind.

Notify a member of the Crisis Response Team and the Superintendent.

Walk about the school. Listen. Give assurances. Be present to expressions of grief and pain.

In order to be available for consultation and decision-making, initiate your School Action Plan and delegate as necessary many of the following roles to other staff members:

Coordinator - totally aware of overall response plan (may be principal, vice-principal, principal's assistant or delegate)

Spokesperson (Principal or Designate) - official source of information to: staff, students, parents, police, hospital, media, Administration Centre (Superintendent, Director, Trustees)

Liaison with the Family - clearly establish wishes of family, offer assistance. (Preferably a person with whom family is familiar.)

Administration of School - designate a staff member to assist during the response period

- make decisions regarding the operation of the school
- provide coverage for teachers involved, using other teachers known to the students
- with care and sensitivity, attend to the deceased person's personal property, including desk and/or locker and contents
- refer identified students for counselling
- provide a quiet, supervised room for students requiring support
- may lower flag to half-staff until after the funeral

Commemorative Actions - staff members to develop and coordinate appropriate services.

THE ROLE OF STAFF

1. To respond immediately.
2. To affirm the grieving process.
3. To support and assist the key school personnel in the handling of the crisis.
4. To provide emotional support to each other and to the students affected.
5. To assist in the recognition of needs (staff/student) and suggest appropriate actions and resources.
6. To be sensitive to the need for follow-up support during the short-term and long-term grieving period.

WHO TO NOTIFY: STAFF

In the event of a death or crisis, inform all staff members as soon as it is practical. The class directly affected should also be given an immediate opportunity to deal with the crisis and their response to it.

INITIAL STAFF MEETING

- 1) Open with prayer.
- 2) Clarify facts around the death or crisis.
- 3) Be sensitive to staff and students, and allow time for expression of grief, for discussion and internalizing. It is recommended that a regular staff member rather than a supply teacher be with the affected class for whatever time is necessary.
- 4) Decide how classes should be informed. Personal visits to classrooms are recommended rather than announcements over the P.A. system.
- 5) Encourage the teachers to discuss the event with their classes. In case of death use the guidelines in "Talking to Children About Death". Review carefully the "Do's and Don't's" in "Talking to Children About Death". (See pages 11 and 12 in this guideline.) Provide a copy for each teacher.
- 6) Assign a designated person to talk to the family regarding school involvement. Wishes of the family must be respected.
- 7) Announce the time for a follow-up meeting.
- 8) Inform the staff of the availability of support through the "Crisis Response Team".

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

In some cases, principals and supervisors are able to/wish to cope with a crisis on their own, either by themselves or with the help of others in the school or work site. Other times, however, the nature or magnitude of the crisis necessitates extra resources to help those who have been affected. The emotional trauma resulting from a crisis can place extraordinary demands on the principal or supervisor - and can affect them too. The Crisis Response Team is available to provide the added support that lets people deal with the crisis.

RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

The roles and responsibilities of the Crisis Response Team members includes any or all of the following steps:

1. Receive initial crisis calls, assess situation and activate appropriate team members.
2. Gather relevant data and facts about the situation.
3. Facilitate appropriate personnel being notified, outside of Crisis Team, and provide direction/ support.
4. Be available for initial staff meeting where crisis information is shared with all staff. Plan and offer to implement a prayer service at that time.
5. Be available to support staff in sharing news with affected students. Plan and offer to implement a prayer service at that time.
6. Provide direct support to students, i.e., facilitate class/student discussion and response.
7. Provide informal support to staff as needed.
8. Assist principal to develop a response plan which ensures the event is dealt with as thoroughly and compassionately as possible.
9. Communicate with parents as necessary.
10. Assist in identifying high-risk students and be available to provide one-on-one or small group support.
11. Provide resources to school and teachers.
12. Assist with planning a memorial service and provide follow-up contact.

SPECIFIC DUTIES OF SOCIAL WORKER & RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONSULTANT

1. Co-chair Crisis Response Team meetings.
2. Facilitate professional development opportunities for the team.
3. Recommend the purchasing of relevant materials for the Board regarding bereavement, loss, crisis response.
4. Establish and maintain a 'Crisis Response Kit' at the Catholic Education Centre.

FOLLOW-UP STAFF MEETING IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH

1. Give staff any new information available around the death and the wishes of the family concerning visitation and funeral arrangements. In the case of a deadly communicable disease, the Principal will involve Public Health Personnel in the meeting.
2. Give an opportunity for staff to discuss their feelings and to share the reaction of the students in the classroom.
3. Identify students and/or classes that are particularly vulnerable who might benefit from grief counselling.
4. Discuss an appropriate response that the school might make; i.e., visitation to the funeral home, Mass offerings, "in memoriam" contributions, formation of choir for the funeral service. Involve students in this discussion.
5. Begin planning school prayer or liturgy to which family members might be invited.
6. Remind staff of the support available through the "Crisis Response Team".

REVIEW PROCESS

After a period of time has passed, initiate a Review Process at a staff meeting to consider what assistance may still be needed and to assess the Crisis Response Process.

PEOPLE TO BE NOTIFIED:

(not necessarily in the order listed)

- Superintendent of School/Director of Education
- Crisis Response Team Member(s)
- Parish Priest/Team Members
- Area Trustee
- Public Health Nurse
- Area Schools - Schools where siblings may attend
- Crossing Guard
- Bus Driver/Company
- Persons directly associated with the school; e.g., absent staff members, previous principal, etc.

INFORMING THE STUDENTS

This information should be given apart from other school announcements, and preferably in person. A bulletin for each staff member could be written, as well.

It may include:

- the name of the person and the nature of the crisis; and any necessary detail;
- an expression of your feelings of grief and personal remembrances;
- a preliminary discussion of possible responses that the students may wish to make; e.g., letters to family, class prayer.

NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS IN CASE OF A DEATH

An announcement should be sent to each family in the school community as soon as possible. This could include: the name of the deceased, the relation to the school, the circumstances of the death and funeral arrangements if they are known. (See Appendix on page 18 for two sample notices.)

In the case of communicable disease, information from the Medical Officer of Health should be sent home.

WHEN A STUDENT DIES

Parental distress is great and parents may be understandably reluctant to discuss the death of their child with a person unknown to them. Therefore, it is important that the designated contact person be someone with whom they are familiar; e.g., principal, classroom teacher, chaplain, school social worker, parish team member.

When you contact the family, you would first express the sympathy of yourself and your staff. In this initial conversation, you may or may not be able to confirm the details concerning the death. You may wish to offer to call again at a later time to see if the school community could be of assistance. **IT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH CLEARLY THE WISHES OF THE FAMILY CONCERNING THE SCHOOL'S INVOLVEMENT.**

RESPONSE TO MEDIA

Contact family for permission to release information and/or picture.

All statements should be made by the principal. If approached by the media, refer them to the designated principal.

Response to media should be low key, simple, and factual.

Share plans the school is making regarding the school's response as a faith community.

WHEN A MEMBER OF A STUDENT'S FAMILY DIES

When a member of the family dies and the student returns to school, it is often uncomfortable for both the student and his/her classmates. First, inform the teachers associated with the student so they may be supportive and understanding of the student's process of grieving.

Some suggestions for the teachers are:

- . Let the student know you are aware of the death in his/her family. Avoiding the fact is not helpful to the student.
- . Let the student know that you recognize that life may be painful or hard for him/her right now.
- . Visit the funeral home or attend the funeral, and sign the guest book so the student will know that you were there.
- . Send a card or note addressed to the student rather than to the family.
- . Be prepared to let the student talk about the death, his/her feelings, situations at home, as well as discussing the academic concerns due to lost time.
- . Share with the student your own experiences of the death of a loved one.
- . Discuss the death with the student's classmates; i.e., appropriate responses, visiting a funeral home, attending the funeral service.
- . Discuss with the classmates how to be supportive and understanding of the student's process of grieving.

DO'S

- 1) Feel comfortable asking for help. This experience need not be handled alone.
- 2) Develop an environment in which children feel perfectly safe to ask any questions knowing that they will receive an honest answer.
- 3) Use correct terminology related to death.
- 4) Listen and empathize. Make sure you hear what is said and not what you think the student ought to have said.
- 5) Allow the students to express as much grief as they are able or are willing to share with you. Organize activities that will allow students to tangibly express their grief; e.g., good memory cards, sympathy wall, prayer sharing.
- 6) Share your own feelings and tell about your own memories of the person but don't idealize the dead person.
- 7) Say "I don't know" when you don't know.
- 8) Share your faith with the students to facilitate their growth in faith.
- 9) As much as possible, maintain routine, a sense of continuity and care-giving.
- 10) Remember that holidays, anniversaries, and special days will be stressful at times.
- 11) Do let people know it is understandable to be angry with God.

DON'TS

- 1) Don't feel you must handle this alone. Ask for help, but don't ignore the death.
- 2) Don't force a child to participate in a discussion ... only invite.
- 3) Never link suffering and death with guilt, punishment and sin.
- 4) Don't lecture. It's all too tempting to make a point or moralize.
- 5) Don't force a "regular day" upon grieving students but at the same time don't allow the class to be totally unstructured. Offer choices of activities; e.g., letters, journals, discussion.
- 6) Avoid cliches. Don't say "I know how you feel ... it takes time ... try to get back to normal ... he/she is better off ..."
- 7) Don't trivialize the tragedy.
- 8) Don't avoid discussions because you are uncomfortable and unable to cope with your own feelings about death.
- 9) Don't expect adult responses from children. There is a wide variety in children's responses.
- 10) Don't try to change the mood from outside. Structure the environment to facilitate good grief.
- 11) Don't use pious statements, e.g., "It is God's will," or "God took him/her."

DEVELOPING STAGES IN RESPONSE TO GRIEF

5-9 YEAR OLDS

Fear personification of death - skeletons and ghosts, fear of graveyards, haunted houses, "bad" people, darkness and being alone. They may know the body decays but believe the spirit still lives. Talk openly to clear up misconceptions and lessen fears. Reassure children that they will be cared for. Accept that their level of conceptual understanding necessitates a concrete view of death.

10-14 YEAR OLDS

Children are beginning to understand and accept a mature and realistic explanation of death as final and inevitable. They are developing their independence from parents but are not yet fully established individuals. Consequently, a death, especially of a peer, can cause considerable distress based on a fear for their own security. They may refuse to believe they are mortal.

Teach

- i) it is normal to feel sad, angry, lonely;
- ii) it is all right to cry openly and talk about a death;
- iii) there is a need to say good-bye.

15-18 YEARS

Teens are beginning to understand the issues of death, war, abortion, suicide, etc. They are moving to a more abstract level of thinking and yet their tendency is to react, especially in the death of a peer, in a highly dramatic, intense fashion with reliance on personalized rituals, symbols, etc. Due to nervous reaction their responses can be unpredictable: withdrawal, denial, even laughter.

Correct Terminology Related to Death: The words "died" and "dead" are preferred to express the finality of death. **Avoid** phrases like the following which cloud the issue or confuse the bereaved:

Not

- 1) God took _____ away.
- 2) _____ passed away.
- 3) _____ has gone away.
- 4) God wanted _____ to be with him.

Rather

1. _____ has died.
2. _____ is dead.
3. _____ will not be back.
4. Everyone must die. _____ has died sooner than

FUNERAL MASS/MEMORIAL SERVICE

(if school is approached for suggestions)

Suggested Readings:

1st Reading:	Job 19:23-27 Isaiah 25:6-9	Lamentations 3:22-27 Isaiah 43:1-5
2nd Reading:	Romans 14:7-12 Romans 5:5-11 Romans 8:14-17	Revelation 21:1-4 I Corinthians 15:12-19
Responsorial Psalms:	Psalm 23 Psalm 24	Psalm 46 Psalm 61
Gospel:	Luke 10:25-28 Matthew 5:1-10	John 11:32-38 John 19:25-30

Suggested Hymns:

Be Not Afraid	CBW #714
I Have Loved You	G&P #104
I Am The Bread Of Life	CBW #569
I Will never Forget You	CBW #708
Whatever You Do	CBW #717
Into Your Hands	CBW #682
I Am The Bread Of Life	CBW #569
On Eagle's Wings	G&P #126
Only In God	G&P #128
Song of All Seed	CBW #720
Isaiah 49	G&P #30

Ideas:

- Invitations to family, administration, other persons who had contact with bereaved; e.g.- previous teacher or principal
 - crossing guard
 - parent volunteers
- table with picture, floral arrangement and candle

It is important that the planning of the Memorial Liturgy be a shared experience. Involve staff and students.

THE BEREAVEMENT PROCESS AND SOME EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS

There are five stages to this process.

Although most people pass through all five (5) stages, they do so at different rates and may not go through the five steps in the same order or they may go back and forth between stages. It is important to realize that different individuals react differently at each stage. The depth of an individual's grief will vary with i) his or her personality, ii) his or her relationship with the deceased, iii) the suddenness of the death.

PROCESS

EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS

1. Shock and Denial

- a) No expression of feelings
- b) Dazed, daydream, hysterical laughter, exaggerated response, loudness, repeated comments of denial
- c) Unable to sleep or sleep too much, nightmares
- d) Unable to eat or eat too much
- e) Inability to concentrate, stress-related illness

2. Rage and Anger

- a) Most difficult stage for people to handle. Teachers and other friends tend to distance themselves from the grieving
- b) Verbal and physical aggression
- c) Negative views of life in general
- d) Unable to sleep or sleep too much, nightmares
- e) Unable to eat or eat too much
- f) Inability to concentrate, stress-related illness
- g) Over compensation for lost life - restless, go wild, become risk takers, try to cram great deal of life into short period of time

3. Guilt or Bargaining

- a) "If I'm good, will you ...?"
- b) May become overly religious
- c) Attempt to make up for loss of deceased
- d) Assume mannerism of deceased
- e) Withdrawn
- f) Abnormal sleeping and eating patterns may continue
- g) Unable to concentrate, stress related-illnesses
- h) Clinging ("don't leave me") or replacement ("do you love me as much as ...")

4. Depression or Sadness

- a) Quiet or withdrawn, great deal of crying, negativity of life
- b) Abnormal sleeping or eating patterns, stress-related illness
- c) Realization of inability to concentrate - worry about impact upon academic success
- d) Panic about who will care for me
- e) Idealization of the one who died

5. Acceptance

- a) Start to think about event without all of the other negative things
- b) This stage can take years and some people never do accept

RESOURCES

BOOKS & FILMS

Preschool to Age 7

Brown, Margaret. The Dead Bird
 Corley. Tell Me About Death
 Corley. Tell Me About Funerals
 DePaola, Tomi. Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs
 Fassler, Joan. My Grandpa Died Today
 Harris, Audrey. Why Did He Die?
 Kantrowitz. When Violet Died
 Silverstein, Shel. The Giving Tree
 Viorst, Judith. The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
 Zolotow, Charlotte. My Grandson Lew

Age 8-11

Bascaglia, Leo. The Fall of Freddie the Leaf
 Coerr. Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes
 Grollman, Earl. Talking About Death
 Lee, Virginia. The Magic Moth
 Miles. Annie and the Old One
 Orgel, Doris. Mulberry Music
 O'Toole, Donna. Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope
 Powell, Sandy. Geranium Morning
 Schultz, Charles M. Why Charlie Brown, Why?
 Simon. We Remember Philip
 Smith, Doris. A Taste of Blackberries
 White. Charlotte's Web
 Whitehead. The Mother Tree
 Williams, Margery. The Velveteen Rabbit
 Zim, H. & S. Life and Death.

Age 12 and Over

Agee. A Death In The Family
 Craven. I Heard The Owl Call My Name
 Dixon. A Time To Love ... A Time To Mourn
 Greenberg. A Season In-between.
 Gunther, John. Death Be Not Proud
 Hunter, Mollie. A Sound of Chariots
 Kleir, Stanley. The Final Mystery
 Little, Jean. From Anna
 Little, Jean. Home From Afar
 Patterson, Katherine. Bridge to Terabithia
 Rhoden, Eric. The Good Greenwood
 Schotter. A Matter Of Time

Adult Literature

Gordon & Klass. They Need to Know:
 How To Teach Children About Death
 Jackson. Telling A Child About Death
 Kubler-Ross. On Death And Dying
 Le Shan, Edith. Learning To Say Goodbye:
 When A Parent Dies
 Schoeneck, Therese. Hope for Bereaved.
 Wolf. Helping Children Understand Death.

A-V MATERIAL

I. Primary/Junior

Accident, The	Pr.
Annie and the Old One	Jr.
Day Grandpa Died, The	Pr.
Grandma's Bread	Pr.-Jr.
Magic Moth, The	Jr.
My Grandson Lew	Pr.
My Turtle Died Today	Pr.
Saying Goodbye	Jr.
Story of A Mouse, The	Pr.
Taste of Blackberries, A	Jr.
Uncle Monty's Gone	Jr.
Where is Dead?	Pr.

II. Junior/Intermediate

And We Were Sad, Remember	Jr.-Int.
Anna & Poppy	Jr.-Int.
Fall of Freddie the Leaf	Jr.-Int.
Portrait of Grandpa Doc	Jr.-Int.
Very Good Friends	Jr.-Int.
Where's Pete	Jr.-Int.

III. Intermediate/Senior

Cipher in the Snow	Int.-Sr
Death of a Gandy Dancer	Int.-Sr.
Tho' I Walk Through The Valley	Int.-Sr

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Bruce-Grey Children's Services	Owen Sound	371-4773
Community Mental Health Team	Hanover	364-7788
Crisis Intervention Centre	Owen Sound	376-2121
Distress Line of Grey Bruce		1-888-371-8485
Employee Assistance Programme (Support for Staff)	In English In French Health Info	1-800-265-5211 1-800-363-3872 1-877-242-6877
Grey Bruce Owen Sound Health Unit		1-800-265-3781
Grey Bruce Palliative Care Hospice Association		376-4920
Kids Help Phone		1-800-668-6868
Queen's Bush Rural Ministries		369-6774

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO SCHOOL

We at (name of school) are a family. Families share their good times and joys as well as their sad times. Today is a very sad day for all of us because (student's name) died very suddenly last night.

(student's name) was drowned while on a picnic with his family. This is a great shock to all of us and we are going to miss him as part of our school family. His own family will need our prayers and our kind words.

Please remember (student's name) and his family as we say this prayer together.

Most loving God, you know us each by name. You constantly send your love to support us on our journey. Please give us the strength to withstand this grief. Bless (student's name)'s family and help them to be able to give each other the support and the love that they need at this time.

SAMPLE: NOTICE TO PARENTS

(Parental approval is recommended. Liaison with family in developing this statement is important.)

NAME OF SCHOOL

NAME OF PERSON

DATE OF DEATH

1. God of comfort and hope, welcome _____ into your loving arms. Bring him/her into your presence where there is light and fullness of life. Let your face shine upon him/her and grant him/her peace in your kingdom forever. Amen.

Visitation at _____ Funeral Home

Date _____ Time _____

Address _____

Funeral at _____ Church

Date _____ Time _____

2. Death is a mystery and is difficult to accept. _____, one of our grade 4 students, was tragically killed yesterday as the result of a car accident.

- (or) _____, one of our grade 4 students died yesterday after a long and brave battle with cancer. Please join us in prayer and support for _____ and her family.

Visitation at _____ Funeral Home

Date _____ Time _____

Address _____

Funeral at _____ Church

Date _____ Time _____

These guidelines were prepared in response to the various crises that have directly impacted on school communities. They are a means of offering support and providing practical suggestions and direction for principals and school/education centre staffs who are called on to deal with death or tragic events.

The information contained here includes available community resources and suggestions that can be adapted to suit your particular needs. Its main purpose is to assist you in providing a supportive and caring environment for all within your school community. A crisis is never easy to cope with but step-by-step procedures can help alleviate some of the stress that surrounds it.

This document is based on material provided by the Halton, Lincoln, Welland, and Wellington C.D.S. Boards. We wish to thank them for sharing this material.

BRUCE-GREY CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

BOARD OFFICE 364-5820
Religious Education Consultant
Social Worker

Employee Assistance 1-800-268-5211 (English)
Program (E.A.P.) 1-800-363-3872 (French)

Note: *Team members are available in an advisory capacity only.*

*When we lose a parent, we grieve over the loss of our past.
When we lose a spouse, we grieve over the loss of our present.
When we lose a child, we grieve over the loss of our future.*