

CRISIS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

The overall purpose for responding to critical incidents is to help with the emotional impact that will undoubtedly follow. In situations of high intensity, staying focussed can be a challenge, but it can prove helpful to have a checklist to refer to. The following is such a checklist.

Please note that not all points listed here are relevant to every situation. Also, some items may be tabled for a second or third meeting rather than at the initial gathering of the team. For the purpose of our discussion, the Crisis Response Checklist has been categorized into three sections: the initial response, responding to the emotional needs of those impacted, and what to do after the initial crisis response.

INITIAL RESPONSE

VERIFY FACTS

- Have facts been confirmed with family and/or police?

WRITE STATEMENT FOR PHONE INQUIRES

- What will the receptionist tell people who phone with questions?

CONSIDER ACCESSING OUTSTANDING AGENCIES FOR MORE ASSISTANCE

- Do you need more help?
- Who have you made prior arrangements with?
- How will you deal with unfamiliar people entering the school/community/organization?

DEAL WITH MEDIA ISSUES

- If the event will bring media attention, how will this be managed?

CONTACT RELEVANT PARTIES

- Who else needs to be informed - family, school, police, etc.?

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- Which staff need to be relieved of responsibilities in order to help?
- Which staff may not be in the position to carry on with their normal duties?

ORGANIZE STAFF MEETING

- What will staff be told? What will their role be?
- What about those not present at the staff meeting?
- Possible agenda: media policy, debriefing/ counselling procedures, critical incident group debriefing plans, what to watch for in people, etc.

DETERMINE IF LEGAL COUNSEL IS NEEDED

- Do you have questions about what you should or shouldn't say in order to minimize the risk of litigation?

ENSURE BUILDING SECURITY

- Is a presence needed? If so, when and where?

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OTHER HELPERS

- How will you respond to local helpers (i.e., staff from agencies, clergy) who show up to “help”?

TECHNOLOGY

- Should networking websites be monitored? Recognize the impact of the “rumour mill” that can be exacerbated with cell phones, text messages, Facebook, etc.

DETERMINE WHEN THE TEAM WILL MEET AGAIN

- Will you meet again throughout the day – is it even possible?

SECURE LOCKER/DESK & MATERIALS OF DECEASED

- What are the family’s wishes? What will students/friends/co-workers do with their locker, etc.?

CONSIDER BUILDING CLOSURE

- Will the building be closed? If the building is a school, how will parent notification and child-care be handled?

REVIEW WHO IS MISSING THAT DAY

- Why aren’t they there? Who will connect with them?

RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF THOSE IMPACTED

CONTACT WITH FAMILY

- Will a school/community/organization representative visit or send food or flowers?
- In the case of suicide, does the family want it publicly identified as a suicide?
- What are the family’s wishes for funeral and memorial activities?

IDENTIFY HIGH RISK PEOPLE

- Who is closely connected who may need immediate support?
- Who is at risk of violence, suicide, etc.?

CARRY OUT INDIVIDUAL DEBRIEFING

- Meet with those who have been identified as high risk.

OFFER INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

- Trained counsellors should be available to meet with people individually who require more in-depth and long term support.

WRITE STATEMENT FOR SCHOOL/COMMUNITY /ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

- Will people simply be informed or will the statement be followed by a debriefing? The statement should be clear and give facts but not go into unnecessary detail. Handouts on reactions and tips are often helpful.

CONSIDER A LARGE GROUP (E.G. TOWN HALL) INFORMATION SESSION

- Would it be beneficial? What are the potential problems that may arise?

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ORGANIZE CRITICAL INCIDENT GROUP DEBRIEFING (CIGD)

- Would some groups benefit from CIGD? Who will lead the groups?

PREPARE ANY PRINT MATERIAL

- Handouts regarding what to expect, what might be helpful, etc.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

PREPARE PARENT LETTER & HANDOUTS

- In most cases parents should know what happened and what the response of the school was. Contact information should be provided.
- Will a letter be sent home with students or mailed out?
- Parents may find handouts of issues related to the incident helpful.

ORGANIZE SAFE ROOM/GRIEF ROOM

- Who will staff the room? Where will it be located? What will be there?

CONSIDER A PARENT INFORMATION SESSION

- Will parents ask for this? Would it be beneficial?

AFTER THE INITIAL RESPONSE

CONSIDER MEMORIAL OPTIONS

- Will a permanent or temporary memorial be formed?

EVALUATE & DEBRIEF RESPONSE

- Spend time evaluating the team's response and debriefing the experience

ASSESS THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO BE AFFECTED

- Refer to specialized resources if trained counsellors are not available.

PLAN FOLLOW-UP

- Who will continue follow-up with at-risk people?

CONSIDER ANNIVERSARIES

- How will anniversaries be handled? Will the CIGD team need to be involved?

MANAGE ADDITIONAL ISSUES

- Unexpected issues may arise for the team.

Consider what additional considerations you would add to the Crisis Response Checklist that relate specifically to your context.