

Universal Supports Following a Crisis: Guidance for School Leaders

PURPOSE

This tool provides some guidance to school leaders on the action steps to consider when responding to the needs of staff and students after a crisis. The recommendations are relevant for supporting the needs of individuals, groups of students, or the school community after a crisis.

DIRECTIONS:

Please reference the following tool when creating the school crisis (virtual or in-person) plan. This tool can be shared with members of the leadership and/or crisis team. The considerations and action items in this tool should be approached with an integrated, collaborative lens.

Shared Leadership and Ownership

Collective commitment and responsibility for a whole child vision, grounded in equity



- Determine membership and meet with members of the crisis team, both school-based and community partners, in person or via virtual space
- Use the team to reflect on implementation and effectiveness of the current plan during the crisis; discuss what went well and what did not go well, informal feedback from students, staff and families, etc. (some examples of data to discuss might be attendance, increased caseload of students for student support staff, caregiver or student challenges expressed often, internal and external systems of communication, etc.)
- Work with student support staff to develop a plan or list of resources that address the mental health and self-care needs of staff members
- Consider revisions to the school schedule to accommodate student need and ensure availability of resources
- Determine training needs for teachers (e.g., developing student support plans for students, new schedule)
- In collaboration with student support staff, arm teachers and staff with knowledge about how [stress impacts learning and development](#)
- Proactively consider questions and potential responses to questions from staff, teachers, parents, etc.
- Determine process for supporting students who have disabilities/Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)/504 Plans and for those who did not participate in any alternative forms of learning (e.g., remote learning)
- Collectively determine a plan or protocol for reaching out to students who have not been heard from
- In collaboration with student support staff, determine how students of concern will be identified for services moving forward
- Consider a flexible grading system (particularly for students with the most challenges)
- Discuss how the school will continue to provide ongoing communication with parents/caregivers
- Leverage the voice of parents/caregivers and students to determine what might be missing (to promote equity); determine ways to collect that data formally and informally
- Continue to meet with the crisis team on an ongoing basis; use a standard agenda to include updates from student support staff

Developmental Relationships

Relationships defined by trust, reciprocity, challenging growth, and balance of power



- Encourage feedback from staff about the changes in schoolwide protocols related to schedule changes, grading, and other routines and procedures adopted in response to the crisis
- Stay up to date on available resources and how to access them
- Ensure staff has access to resources and time to address self-care; model and communicate to staff that this is a priority of the school
- Brainstorm with leadership team ways for staff to connect with each other virtually (e.g., coffee breaks, virtual lunch dates)
- Connect and check-in with staff at least twice per month for 10-15 minutes via video, telephone, etc.
- Encourage and allow staff to give input into the supports needed to address their professional and personal needs
- Provide opportunities and some autonomy for adjustment in schedule based on the needs of staff and students
- Increase your availability to the school community (e.g., increase hours of availability via telephone or online, shorten response time to emails when possible)
- Create opportunities to visit all virtual classes at least once weekly to check-in and connect with students; participate in team-building activities as schedule permits
- Leverage opportunities to connect with parents/caregivers via telephone, video chat, etc.

Supportive Environments

Physically, emotionally and identity safe, inclusive, and co-regulating spaces



- Create and encourage opportunities for self-care among staff (e.g., adjustments to staff schedules, ideas to implement self-care throughout the day)
- Encourage staff to provide self-care promotion for students
- Collaborate with leadership team and plan for a schoolwide discussion with students and staff (e.g., virtual town hall or community meeting, electronic communications) acknowledging the traumatic event(s) (e.g., the pandemic, violence) and the potential impact on staff and families
- During the schoolwide discussion with staff, share the schoolwide adjustments made to accommodate and provide the necessary support for staff and students; provide some high-level insight into how the length of time for this adjustment will be determined
- During the schoolwide discussion with students, explain how individual support will be provided and reassure them that both their mental health and academic needs are a priority
- Build time into the schedule to accommodate and encourage time for staff to collaborate and leverage strengths and expertise of other staff members (e.g., student support staff might collaborate with the art teacher to create posters reminding students of calming strategies)

Skill and Mindset Building

Integrated development of the Building Blocks for Learning

- Ensure staff are prepared to provide students with factual information about the traumatic event (e.g., consider providing a script to ensure consistency in messaging)
- Collaborate with student support staff to determine potential gaps in staff knowledge regarding strategies for supporting themselves and students
- Provide time and resources to ensure staff is accommodated and prepared to teach students what constitutes trauma, symptoms, and ways to get support
- Provide time and resources to ensure staff is accommodated and prepared to support students in recognizing their own symptoms of trauma
- Collaborate with staff to ensure they are intentionally developing [foundational skills and mindsets](#) needed for learning and life

