

After massive crisis events, the community may spend weeks, months, and even years to reestablish a sense of normalcy. School staff, families, and community agencies will work to establish a sense of physical and psychological safety and meet basic needs. Below are some quick resources for individuals to review during the recovery process. There are links to certain documents that expand on the concepts discussed below.

### **Caring for the Caregiver: Tips for Families and Educators**

(<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators> )

Parents, teachers, and other caregivers play a critical role in helping children cope with crises, often ignoring their own needs in the process. However, caregivers must take good care of themselves so they are able to take good care of the children in their charge.

1. A natural instinct for parents and other caregiving adults is to put their personal needs aside in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in their care. It is extremely important, though, for caregivers to monitor their own reactions and take care of their own needs, because failure to do so can result in stress and burnout.
2. Burnout interferes with one's ability to provide crisis support and intervention assistance.
3. In addition to burnout, caregivers also may experience secondary trauma or stress that results from learning about another's traumatic experience and/or helping someone who has been directly affected by such tragedy.
4. While any caregiver may exhibit signs and symptoms of stress and secondary trauma, caregivers who have their own histories of prior psychological trauma, loss and grief, mental illness (including substance abuse), or who lack social and family resources will be more vulnerable to these issues.
5. Some reactions are commonly experienced by caregivers after a crisis; however, others may warrant professional support or monitoring. These include an inability to stop thinking about the crisis, chronic fatigue and exhaustion, gastrointestinal problems, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, irritability, anger, suicidal thoughts, severe depression, withdrawal from others, and/or an inability to complete or return to normal job responsibilities.
6. All caregivers need to consider the following suggestions to prevent burnout: Physical and Emotional Self-Care, Social Care and Connection, Accessing Support Resources, and Setting Limits on Consecutive Responses.

### **Suggestions to Assist Schools to Reopen after a Disaster (Reeves, et al, 2011)**

1. Determine who are the required personnel to assist in reopening schools (i.e. Superintendent, Finance, Operations/Maintenance, Human Resources, Academics, etc.). Make decisions on who has the authority to allocate funds and make district-wide decisions if the typical individuals (e.g. interim superintendent) are not available to fill their roles.

2. Identify alternative locations if your normal facilities are not available to have schools. This may be a time to “think outside of the box” if the school is unavailable. Work with local government officials to gain temporary designations for sites to hold schools. This may include local libraries, buildings of worship, sports complexes, and mobile classrooms that are rented. If facilities are not available, can you provide online learning or send educational materials home to families for students to complete?
3. Partnership with community agencies, emergency relief services, and businesses may assist in gathering supplies needed to teach and feed students.
4. Determine if the school has the ability to transport students to the “school”. Designate a team to determine transportation strategies.
5. Determine when and for how long school will last each day. Will schools continue to provide pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes? How will students with special needs be served from ages 3-21?
6. Determine how you to have access to vital records (i.e. attendance, special education, cumulative, etc.). How will you continue to maintain the records? How will you receive the records for new students and students who move out of the district?
7. Determine how you will communicate with staff, families, and the community about temporary school district operations. How will you use traditional and social media resources to provide information?
8. Determine how will you resume normal operations of the district and restore the learning environment.

**Helping Children after Natural Disasters: Resources for Families and Educators** (<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/natural-disaster>)

**Immediately Following a Natural Disaster: Specific Information for Schools**

- *Identify children and youth who are high-risk and plan interventions.* Interventions may include classroom discussions, individual counseling, small-group counseling, or family therapy.
- *Provide time for students to discuss the disaster.* Depending on the situation, teachers may be able to guide this discussion in class, or students can meet with the school psychologist or other mental health professional for a group crisis intervention. Classroom discussions help children to make some sense of the disaster. Teachers should not be expected to conduct such discussions if children are severely affected or if they are distressed themselves. A crisis team member should be made available to facilitate the discussion.
- *Allow time for staff to discuss their feelings and share their experiences.* Members of your crisis team should also have the opportunity to receive support from a trained mental health professional.
- *Secure additional mental health support.* School mental health professionals can help provide and coordinate mental health services, but it is important to connect with community resources as well in order to provide such long-term assistance.

**Helping Children Adjust to Relocation After a Natural Disaster**

The frequent need to relocate after a disaster creates unique coping challenges. Children will be most affected by the reactions of their parents and other family members, the duration of the relocation,

their natural coping styles and emotional reactivity, and their ability to stay connected with friends and other familiar people and activities. To the extent possible, parents and other caregivers should:

- Provide opportunities for children to see friends.
- Bring personal items that the child values when staying in temporary housing.
- Establish some daily routines so that the child is able to have a sense of what to expect (including returning to school as soon as possible).
- Provide opportunities for children to share their ideas, and listen carefully to their concerns or fears.
- Be sensitive to the disruption that relocation may cause, and be responsive to the child's needs.
- Consider the developmental level and unique experiences of each child; it is important to remember that as children vary, so will their responses to the disruption of relocation.

In addition, school personnel should:

- Utilize an advisory committee of students to help identify ways that students might prioritize positive school activities in order to help them regain a sense of normalcy.
- Permit survivors to retell their stories in a safe environment that avoids vicarious traumatization.
- Provide opportunities for children to discuss how they are coping. Use creative arts (e.g., drama, art, music, photography) to help them express their emotions.
- Help connect families to community resources, and maintain current contacts with disaster-related support services. Provide information to parents about available physical and behavioral healthcare services, and if possible, help provide child care while they are meeting with agencies.
- Incorporate information about the disaster into related subject areas, as appropriate. Science, math, history, and language arts are especially relevant.

## **Resources**

### **Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams**

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators/care-for-the-caregiver-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>

### **Preventing Childhood Trauma: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams**

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/trauma/preventing-childhood-trauma-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>

### **PREPaRE School Safety and Crisis Prevention and Intervention Curriculum Handouts**

WS1 Handout 36: Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

WS2 Handout 3: Normal Coping

WS2 Handout 8: Warning Signs of Traumatic Stress

WS2 Handout 9: Psychological Trauma Risk Checklist

WS2 Handout 11: Private Practitioner Referral Questionnaire

WS2 Handout 15: Psychological Triage Summary Sheet

WS2 Handout 22: Stress Management Resources and Adaptive Coping Strategies

WS2 Handout 23: A Lesson Plan for Use by a Crisis Intervention Team Member When Conducting a Student Psychoeducational Group