

**School Crisis Management
Intervention and Psychological
Support in the Aftermath of
Crises
Handbook**

Education Bureau

Special Education Division

Educational Psychology Service Section

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Preface

Crisis management counts on adequate preparation and effective intervention. This handbook focuses particularly on interventions and psychological support in the aftermath of a school crisis. It aims at providing a framework, some useful guiding principles and a recommended course of actions for schools to get better prepared to respond appropriately and effectively in a crisis.

Each school crisis is different. In addition, every school is different and unique in its makeup of staff, its students, its parents and surrounding community. It is recommended that school personnel should understand the principles in this handbook, make necessary adaptation to suit the school's needs and familiarize themselves with its operational details so that every school is well prepared when a school crisis does occur.

Chapter 1 is an overview of school crisis management. Chapter 2 focuses on the School Crisis Management Team – its structure, the roles and functions of its members and its preparatory work. Chapter 3 provides operational procedures and work flow for crisis impact assessment, intervention and psychological support. In the Appendices are checklists, record forms, flow charts on operational procedures, etc. for school's reference in responding to and documenting its work in a crisis.

Chapter One: Introduction

Definition of a School Crisis

A crisis is a temporary emotional condition wherein one's usual coping mechanisms have failed in face of a perceived challenge or threat.

Events that might precipitate a crisis in schools include the suicide, sudden or accidental death and critical injury of a student or staff, as well as violent incidents and natural disasters. When a school is faced with a crisis, its students, school personnel and parents who are closely related to the precipitating incident may become disturbed. School routines may be disrupted. Often, the school has to handle enquiries from its various stakeholders and the mass media. All these threaten the stability and safety of a school, upsetting its equilibrium. An organised response, based on an assessment of the crisis impact on the school, its students, school personnel and parents as well as a careful evaluation of all the possible alternative courses of action available, is considered vital.

Impact Assessment of the Crisis Event

Individuals may have different responses in face of the same critical incident. It is the interaction effect of various factors that determine the crisis reactions in people. The factors can be grouped into two categories (a) the characteristics of the crisis event and (b) the personal risk factors (Brock, 2011).

The characteristics of a crisis event can include the predictability, duration, consequences and intensity of the crisis event. Generally speaking, crisis events that happen unexpectedly, cause deaths/serious injuries and persist for a long time may be perceived as threatening to most people. The estimated degree of impact is also affected by personal risk factors which include physical proximity, emotional proximity and personal vulnerabilities. Generally speaking, individuals who have witnessed the crisis or stayed at the scene, individuals who have a closer relationship with the victim, individuals with mental health problems, or individuals with less social support and weak coping skills could have stronger threat perception and could be more affected by the incident. With reference to Appendix 6, schools can screen out the at-risk students/staff and determine the appropriate support measures for them.

Basic Principles of Crisis Intervention and Psychological Support

When facing a crisis, it is common for people to have various emotional, cognitive, physical, social and behavioural reactions e.g. feeling upset, confused, fatigue, having poor appetite, etc. Under general conditions, these reactions will subside after a few days or weeks as a process of natural recovery. In the initial stage after the crisis, the main support strategies include clarification of facts, providing psycho-education and establishing social support. Through the teaching of adaptive coping strategies, students can learn about the common crisis reactions and how to cope with them.

However, for those individuals who are severely affected (e.g. those who experience prolonged difficulty falling asleep, nightmares or flash back of crisis related images etc.). Closer contact and more in-depth communication with professionals are required for them. Group or individual counselling may be needed to help them release distress, and they can also acquire coping/relaxation skills to restore normal functioning.

In view of the individual differences in reacting to a critical incident, unnecessary/inappropriate intervention may affect the natural recovery process. On the other hand, unaddressed needs may hinder the recovery process. Thus, it is important to assess the impact of the crisis event and identify at-risk individuals so that intervention and support measures can be appropriately conducted as indicated from the assessed needs.

In addition, crisis reactions may change from time to time. Some students/staff may have delayed crisis reactions, they may not show the need for support immediately after a school crisis happens. Yet, it is important to keep observing and assessing the needs of at-risk students/staff at different post-crisis periods (e.g. after a few days, a few weeks and a few months) so that appropriate support can be arranged accordingly.

Overall speaking, schools should have adequate preparation and be familiarized with the assessment procedures and different support measures, so that timely and appropriate intervention can be rendered to the affected students in time of a crisis.

Chapter Two: The School Crisis Management Team

Objectives and Functions of the School Crisis Management Team

According to the “School Administration Guide”, schools have to set up the School Crisis Management Team (SCMT). The SCMT is the most important unit for crisis intervention in the school. It comprises a group of school staff who know the school community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions when a crisis occurs. Its goals and objectives are:

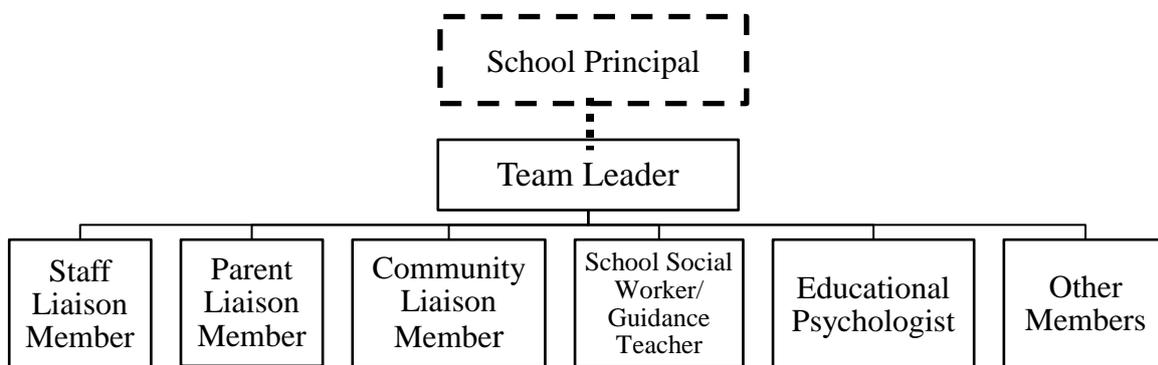
- ♦ **Safety:** to ensure the immediate safety of all students and staff.
- ♦ **Stability:** to re-establish the stability of the school routine as soon as possible.
- ♦ **Consistency:** to control the flow of information in order to eliminate the spread of rumor.
- ♦ **Identification of needs:** to identify at-risk students and staff for necessary intervention to address feelings of distress.
- ♦ **Psychological Support:** to provide appropriate counselling support to facilitate adjustment of individuals and groups, and to mitigate crisis reactions.
- ♦ **Empowerment:** to enhance students’ and staff’s personal growth through adaptive coping with the crisis situation.

Functions of the School Crisis Management Team

The SCMT serves to manage the effects of a crisis and to help the school restore its normal functioning. It co-ordinates the various resources of the school to deal with the unusual situation. The functions of the SCMT are to:

- ♦ Draw up a crisis intervention and support plan
- ♦ Evaluate the impact of the crisis on the school
- ♦ Collect and disseminate updated information and clarify whenever necessary
- ♦ Coordinate all resources, in and outside school, and provide timely and appropriate intervention and support as needed
- ♦ Provide support to teachers, students and parents
- ♦ Monitor the progress of crisis intervention and support
- ♦ Evaluate the crisis intervention and support plan
- ♦ Coordinate the follow up work

Composition of the School Crisis Management Team



Suggested Criteria for Selection of Team Members

The members should:

- ♦ have the trust of the students and staff
- ♦ have the ability to remain calm in tense situations and make decisions
- ♦ be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills
- ♦ be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others

Suggested Team Members and Roles

Team Members	Roles/ Duties
<p>Team Leader</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Lead the team members and oversees the crisis intervention and support plan ♦ Make important decisions in handling the crisis ♦ Monitor and coordinate the progress of crisis intervention and support
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Verify the information from relevant parties if necessary ♦ Keep contact with the School Principal to make plans and assign tasks ♦ Liaise with the Education Bureau/other agencies for support ♦ Call the team members together and facilitate implementation of the crisis intervention and support plan ♦ Consult the Staff Liaison Member about support to staff ♦ Consult the Parent Liaison Member about support to parents ♦ Co-ordinate response to the media ♦ Conduct an evaluation of the crisis intervention and support plan
<p>Staff Liaison Member</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Coordinate the support for staff in handling the crisis
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Keep a phone tree and record forms (see Appendices 1 & 2) and facilitate the use of them when necessary. ♦ Support the School Principal in conducting the staff meeting ♦ Inform staff of the current situation. ♦ Coordinate Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period ♦ Arrange manpower to support the class teacher in need ♦ Prepare and distribute materials and documents ♦ Monitor the progress of Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period, and provide immediate support when necessary

<p>Parent Liaison Member</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Coordinate support for the victim’s family ♦ Coordinate communication with parents
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Contact victim’s family and provide necessary support ♦ Contact parents of other students, as needed ♦ Prepare and distribute the parent letter ♦ Respond to parents’ enquiry, and arrange parent meeting, if needed
<p>Community Liaison Member</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Coordinate with outside resources to provide support to school, students and staff
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Compile an updated list of community resources (see Appendix 3) ♦ Obtain information on the referral procedures to different supporting agencies ♦ Liaise with the Staff Liaison and Parent Liaison members, School Social Worker and Educational Psychologist to see if outside resources need to be called for ♦ Make / assist in making referrals for students, staff and parents ♦ Keep contact with supporting agencies after making the referrals, in order to co-ordinate with other team members on the follow up support to individuals referred
<p>School Social Worker/ Guidance Teacher</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Provide counselling support to students, staff and parents
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Coordinate with supporting agencies to provide counselling to students or staff as needed, and make referrals when necessary ♦ Assist teachers in conducting Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period ♦ Provide counselling support to staff in need ♦ Provide relevant support to parents in need

<p>Educational Psychologist</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Provide professional consultation and support
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Provide professional consultation to the SCMT in assessing the impact of the crisis and developing a strategic crisis intervention and support plan ♦ Support teachers in conducting Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period ♦ Provide individual or group counselling to students and teachers in need, and assist the school in arranging follow up support ♦ Provide emotional support to staff in need
<p>Other Team Members</p>	<p>Roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Provide necessary support in the school crisis intervention and support
	<p>Duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Designate rooms for different uses and make this known to all staff (see Appendix 4) ♦ Assist teachers in conducting Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period ♦ Assist to prepare and distribute materials and documents for Brief Class Meeting and Special Class Period ♦ Familiarize with all procedures and locations of forms ♦ Play a secretarial role in documentation ♦ Assist other team members with their duties, as needed.

Preparatory Work for School Crisis Management

Schools should provide training to enhance knowledge and skills of the SCMT in handling a crisis. Moreover, the relevant resources and tools should be prepared and updated regularly by the SCMT. Schools can refer to the Appendices for reference materials, as follows:

Preparatory documents for the School Crisis Management Team

Appendix 1: Phone Tree

Appendix 2: Record of Phone Calls Made

Appendix 3: Directory of Supporting Agencies

Appendix 4: Designated Use of Venues

School Crisis Management Team Meeting

Appendix 5: Agenda for School Crisis Management Team Meeting

Appendix 6: Initial Impact Assessment of the Crisis Event

Support to Staff Members

Appendix 7: Agenda for Staff Meeting

Appendix 8: Reminders for Teachers

Support to Students

Appendix 9: Announcement to Students (Sample)

Appendix 10: Brief Class Meeting

Appendix 11: Special Class Period

Appendix 12: Brief Class Meeting/Special Class Period: Teachers' Feedback Form

Appendix 13: Group Counselling for Students

Parent Communication and Support

Appendix 14: Parent Letter (Sample 1)

Appendix 15: Parent Letter (Sample 2)

Appendix 16: Parent Meeting

Responding to Mass Media

Appendix 17: Press Release (Sample)

Evaluation and Follow-up

Appendix 18: Agenda for Evaluation Meeting

Appendix 19: Crisis Response Evaluation Questionnaire

Chapter Three: School Crisis Intervention and Support

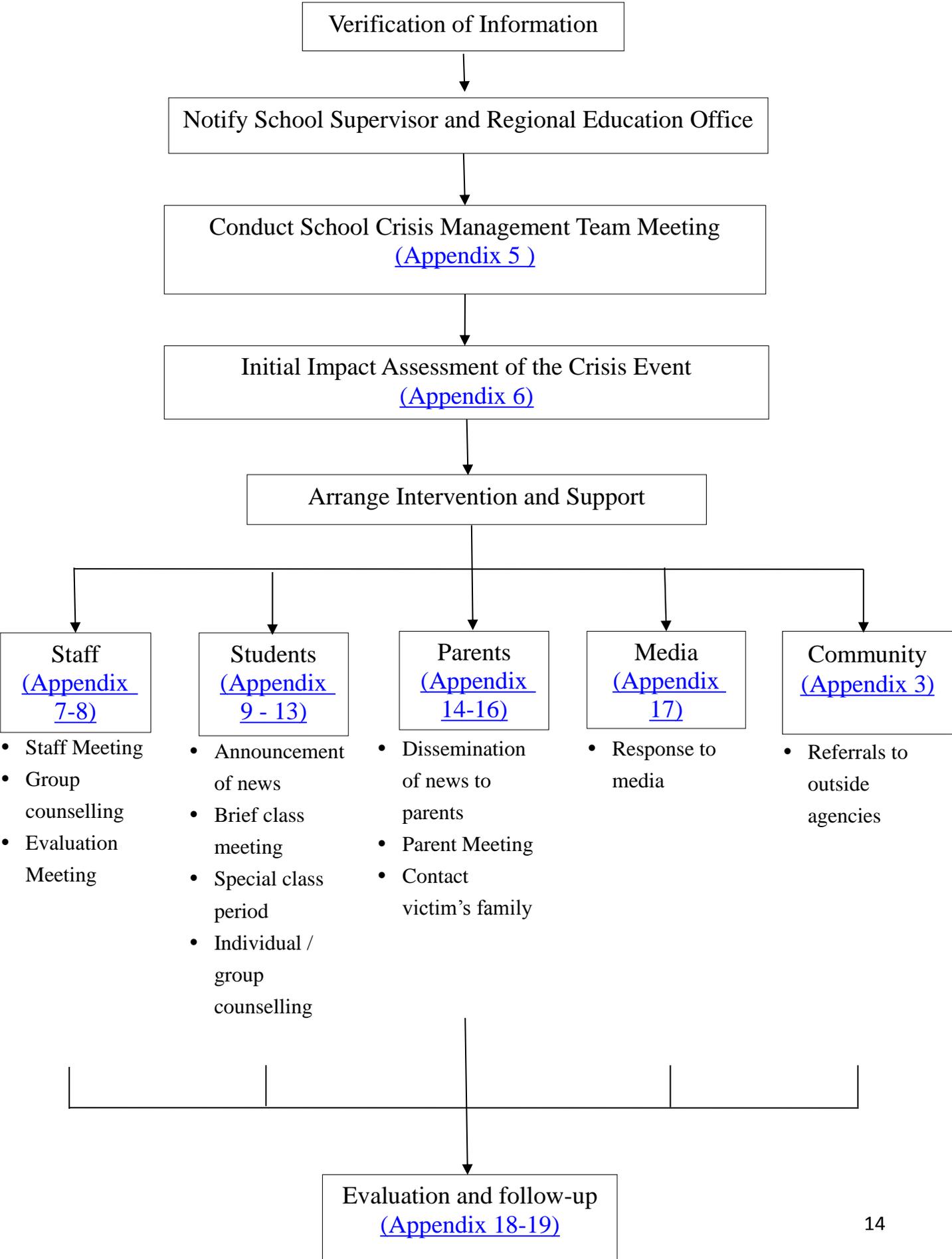
A crisis may cause disturbance to a large number of teachers and students, especially when the incident happens unpredictably and involves deaths/serious injuries. Systematic coordination of all intervention measures is very important to ensure appropriate intervention could be provided to stabilize emotion and reduce distress. School personnel can be assigned to take up different roles and tasks as suggested in the table below. A flow chart showing all the core tasks is also given below.

An Overview of the School Crisis Management Work: Tasks and Persons Responsible

	Tasks	Persons Responsible	Other Members
1.	Verify the information	SCMT Team Leader	Teacher who is familiar with the victim
2.	Notify school supervisor, school management personnel and Regional Education Office	School Principal	
3.	Call an urgent School Crisis Management Team meeting	SCMT Team Leader	School Principal SCMT members
4.	Liaise with outside agencies for support	Community Liaison Member School Social Worker	All staff
5.	Call an all-staff meeting and provide emotional support	Staff Liaison Member School Principal	SCMT members, School Social Worker, Educational Psychologist
6.	Support to students		
	1. Make announcement to students	School Principal Class teachers	
	2. Conduct Brief Class Meeting	Class Teacher Staff Liaison Member	School Social Worker, Educational Psychologist
	3. Conduct Special Class Period	Class Teacher Staff Liaison Member	School Social Worker, Educational Psychologist
	4. Arrange additional support to students in need	School Social Worker	Guidance Teacher, Educational Psychologist
7.	Support to parents		
	1. Inform parents of the crisis	Parent Liaison Member	School Social Worker, Class Teacher
	2. Parent Meeting	Parent Liaison Member	School Principal, Guidance Teacher, School Social Worker
	3. Contact and support the victim's family	Parent Liaison Member	School Principal, Guidance Teacher, School Social Worker
8.	Prepare for media enquiries	School Principal	SCMT Team Leader

9.	Review the crisis intervention and support work		
	1. Conduct evaluation meeting and plan follow-up actions	SCMT Team Leader	SCMT members, Educational Psychologist
	2. Evaluate the effectiveness of crisis response	SCMT Team Leader	School Principal, SCMT members

Crisis Intervention and Support Flow Chart



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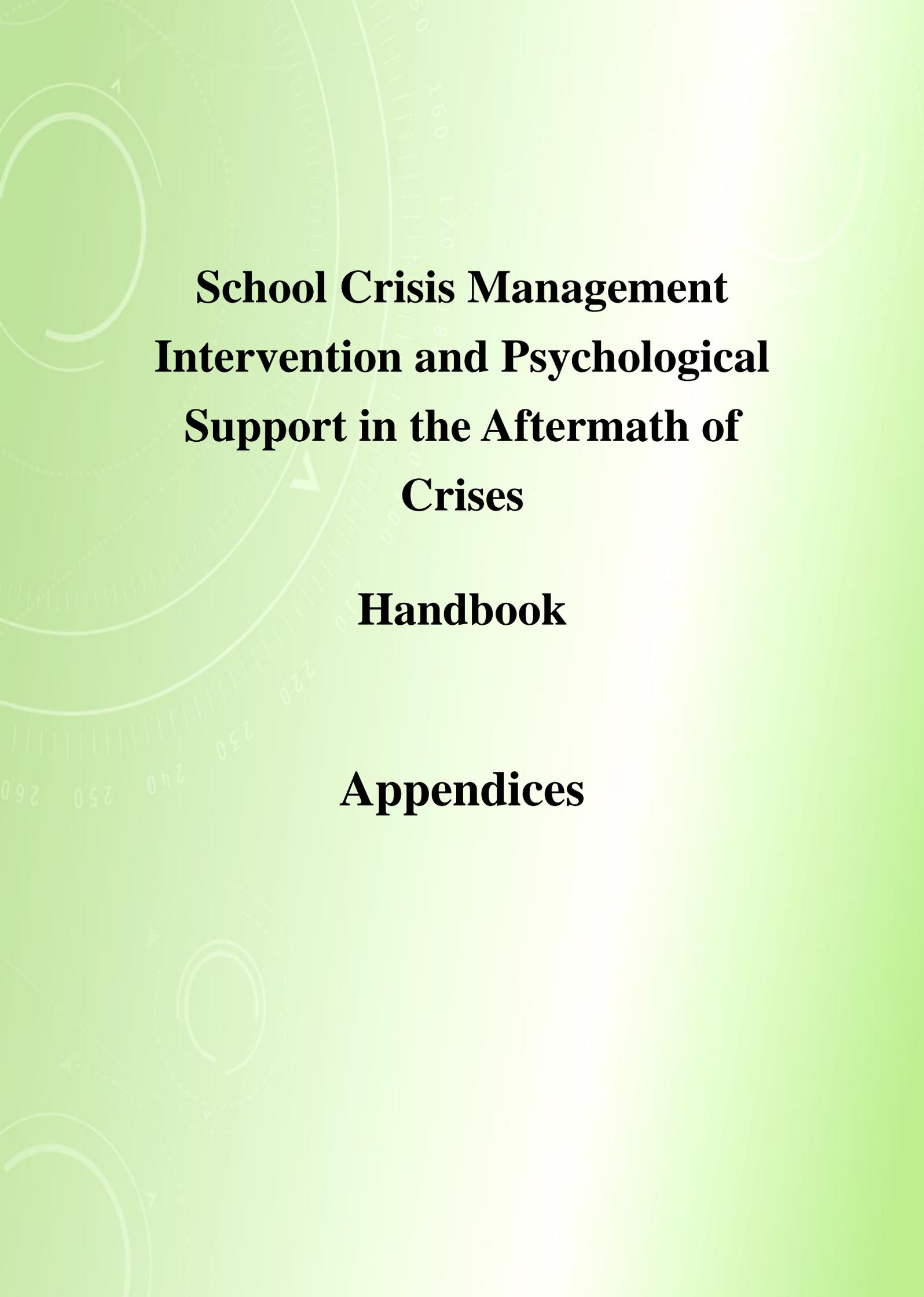
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Phone Tree

Why do we need a phone tree?

The purpose of a phone tree is to communicate with people affected by a crisis (e.g. students, families, and staff). A phone tree enables a message to be given quickly, personally, and specifically, and to better prepare staff emotionally before they need to handle the crisis in school.

The best time to set up a phone tree is at the beginning of a school year. Each member of the staff should have two copies, one to be kept at home and one in school.

Who is on the Phone Tree

The list should include all staff members that may have contact with students or staff. Get alternative – daytime and nighttime, home and work, regular and mobile – phone numbers for people as appropriate.

What to Say in a Phone Tree Conversation

Anyone responding to a crisis on the phone tree should give the following information:

- a. The facts of the crisis as currently known
- b. The date, time, and place of the staff meeting
- c. A request not to speculate about the crisis while carrying out the responsibilities associated with the phone tree
- d. A request to continue calling and giving out the same information
- e. A reminder to maintain confidentiality

Directory of Supporting Agencies

Agency	Name	Post	Telephone no.
Education Bureau Regional Education Office (District: _____)			
Social Welfare Department (_____Section)			
Police Station (_____District)			
Ambulance Service			
Community Agency (_____)			
Fire Services Department (_____District)			
Hospital (_____District)			

*In case of emergency (e.g. someone gets seriously injured or is in a life-threatening/critical situation which warrants immediate medical support), the school should dial 999 for emergency services.

Designated Use of Venues

Purpose	Person(s) Responsible	Venue(s)
Individual counselling (students)		
Individual counselling (staff)		
Group counselling (students)		
Group counselling (staff)		
Media reception		
Parent reception		
Staff meeting		
Parent meeting		

Agenda for School Crisis Management Team Meeting

1. Verify and update the details of the crisis event.
2. Conduct an initial assessment on the impact of the crisis event (Appendix 6) and identify possible affected students and staff.
3. Evaluate if additional support from external or community agencies is needed.
4. Determine the scale, scope and targets of crisis intervention, and arrange the implementation procedures and division of labour.
 - Prepare for media enquiries;
 - Handle enquiries from the police;
 - Answer enquiries from parents and general public;
 - Prepare scripts for information dissemination
 - ✧ For the School Principal or Class Teacher to make announcement to students
 - ✧ For staff members to respond to enquiries
 - Discuss support formats to students
 - ✧ Decide targets and format of announcement (e.g. announcement made by Class Teachers);
 - ✧ Arrange Brief Class Meeting or Special Class Period for students in need;
 - ✧ Arrange meeting with identified students in need of individual and/or group counselling;
 - ✧ Arrange venues.
 - Discuss support formats to staff members and/or parents;
 - Prepare for the initial staff meeting.

Initial Impact Assessment of the Crisis Event

(A) Basic information of the crisis event

Name of Victim: _____

Gender: M/F* Age: _____ Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Home Address: _____

Date/Time/Location of Incident: _____

Brief Description of the Incident: _____

Significant event(s) Preceding the Incident: _____

Background Information of the Victim (If applicable):

a. Family Background: _____

b. School Performance: _____

Academic: _____

Social: _____

Extra-curricular Activities: _____

Media Coverage of the Incident:

School's Previous Experience in Handling Similar Incidents:

* Delete whichever inappropriate

(B) Screening of at-risk students/staff

The following questions can be used as school reference to help identify students/staff who may be affected by the crisis event. The impact of the crisis event is determined by the interaction effects of various factors. Taken into consideration of the unique nature of each crisis, schools can make reference to the following questions to assess possible psychological and emotional disturbance incurred on students/staff and to determine the corresponding intervention.

I. Physical proximity

- Who witnessed the incident?
- Who was/were present at the scene?

Tips: The closer a person stays at the scene of the incident, the higher the risk of psychological trauma is. For instance, if a student saw a person jumping from height, the incident might have a greater impact on him/her.

(List out the at-risk students/class/group/staff)

II. Emotional Proximity

- Who have or had a close/special relationship with the victim?
- Who participated in the same activity or organization as the victim did?

Tips: The closer is the relationship with the victim, e.g. best friend or family members or having a special relationship with the victim, the higher the risk of psychological trauma is. For instance, if a beloved student died of suicide, the incident might have a greater impact on students/staff.

(List out the at-risk students/class/group/staff)

III. Personal Vulnerabilities

- Who experienced a similar crisis or been affected by a similar critical incident recently?
- Who experienced the loss of a significant person or other traumatic events recently?
- Who use a more positive (vs. negative) attitude to cope with the critical incident?
- Who regulate their emotions more properly (vs. readily lose their control)?
- Who obtain more adequate (vs less adequate) social/family support?

Tips: The more are the vulnerability factors (e.g. having mental health problems, lacking social/ family support or having serious family problems), the higher the risk of psychological trauma is.

(List out the at-risk students/staff)

IV. Crisis Reactions

- Who exhibited intense emotional reactions (e.g. excessive fear, anxiety) or even display warning signs of psychiatric problems (e.g. depression, hallucination and delusion)?
- Who exhibited excessively intense behavioural reactions (e.g. use a brutal way to ventilate anger or hurt oneself/others)?

(List out the at-risk students/staff)

Remarks:

1. A person who is closer to the scene of the critical incident, has a closer relationship with the victim, has more personal vulnerability factors or exhibits excessively intense reactions may be at a higher risk of being affected by the incident.
2. When a student/staff has some very vulnerable factors (e.g. mental illness), and/or exhibits excessively strong emotional or behavioural reactions, even though he/she may not have witnessed the incident or have close relationships with the victim, schools should seek **immediate** professionals' (such as social workers', psychologists') views to assess the impact and determine appropriate support measures.
3. The emotional, cognitive, physiological, social, and behavioural reactions of the at-risk students/staff may change over time. The school needs **continuous observation and assessment** to identify their needs so that appropriate support can be offered.

Agenda for Staff Meeting

1. Inform all teachers of the crisis event and the school's stance.
2. Clarify details and queries.
3. Explain and discuss the intervention plan formulated by the SCMT. Arrange its implementation time, procedures and division of labour.
4. Prepare student support work (e.g. Brief Class Meeting, Special Class Period)
 - Explain the content and key points
 - Distribute relevant documents (e.g. "Reminders for Teachers" Appendix 8 and "Recommended Teacher Responses to Students' Reactions towards a Crisis Event" Reference 1)
 - Provide support to teachers in need
5. Convey acceptance of teachers'/staff's emotions
 - Explain common crisis feelings
 - Show understanding towards staff's reactions
 - Identify staff who are severely affected
 - Arrange follow up support to those in need.

Reminders for Teachers

1. Stabilize your emotions, obtain facts and relevant information before rendering support to students.
2. Prepare to listen and render support to students.
3. Encourage students to seek help when necessary, and introduce channels to seek help, which include information on school counselling services.
4. Control spread of rumors as far as possible.
5. Identify emotions and behaviours of students and provide support accordingly.
6. List out and pass onto the School Crisis Management Team a Student Referral List or Student Follow Up List
7. Initiate to seek help from the School Crisis Management Team in handling your class when necessary (e.g. when many students in your class are severely affected).
8. Attend staff meetings and evaluation meetings to report and receive updated information.
9. Refer any questions from the media to the spokesperson of the school.
10. Follow the normal routine and procedure in handling absence or early leave for students until further notice.
11. Allow for flexibility such as to postpone tests or examinations if necessary.

Announcement to Students (Sample)

I am sorry to share with you a piece of sad news. A student of our school was found lying unconsciously on the platform of his flat this morning. He was sent to the hospital and certified dead. The police are conducting an investigation and we should not make any speculation. I'll give you more information when it's available.

We feel very sad and concerned about what has happened. I want to let you know that different people react to this situation in different ways, and that is fine. Some people cry, others have trouble eating or sleeping, some people find it hard to work and others don't have much reaction at all.

We care and feel concerned about all of you. If you want to talk to someone about your feelings or reactions regarding the event, you can go to YYY (the venue). The Student Guidance Teacher, School Social Worker or Educational Psychologist is always there to listen to you.

In life we may encounter adversities. I hope we can adopt a positive attitude and seek help from others to solve the problem. During this difficult time, I hope you can spend some time to talk with your friends or family members and support one another.

Brief Class Meeting

Targets

All students

Objectives

1. Students will receive basic information and facts about the crisis event;
2. Students will have crisis-related questions answered;
3. Students will learn about channels to seek help;
4. Teachers will identify students in need of additional crisis intervention and assistance.

Content

1. Provide concise and precise facts
 - Share about verified facts;
 - Clarify news that are untrue;
 - If the crisis event involves suicide death, teachers should point out that
 - ✧ the event is under police investigation and it is inappropriate to make any speculation.
 - ✧ Suicide is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple causal pathways and interacting factors and not a single cause or stressor is sufficient to explain a suicidal act in most circumstances;
 - ✧ Teachers should negate suicidal behaviour but emphasize that life is precious.
2. Answer students' questions
 - Students' questions should guide the class meeting;
 - Teachers should not give frightening details that are not asked for;
 - Teachers should only provide verified facts;
 - If teachers are uncertain about the answers of the questions, tell the students "I don't know". Clarify and get back to the students if needed;
 - Do not ask the students to recall/ share their crisis experiences.
3. Introduce channels to seek help
 - Tell students channels to seek help, for example, they can seek help from the school guidance personnel/teacher, teachers or parents.
4. Observe students' reactions and identify students in need for additional support;
 - Identify students who show excessively intense emotional or behavioral reactions (e.g. depression, excessive anger, blaming, etc.);
 - Observe reactions of students who have close relationships with the victim

(boyfriend/girlfriend, siblings or “enemies”);

5. Refer students in need to school guidance personnel for additional support.

Special Class Period

Targets

Students assessed to be mildly affected by the crisis event

Objectives

1. Students will receive basic information and facts about the crisis event;
2. Students will learn about common reactions in response to crisis events and warning signs that indicate a need of further support;
3. Students will learn about adaptive coping strategies and channels to seek help;
4. Teachers will identify students in need for additional support.

Content

1. Provide crisis facts
 - Share about verified facts;
 - Clarify news that are untrue;
 - If the crisis event involves suicide death, teachers should point out that
 - ✧ the event is under police investigation and it is inappropriate to make any speculation.
 - ✧ Suicide is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple causal pathways and interacting factors and not a single cause or stressor is sufficient to explain a suicidal act in most circumstances;
 - ✧ Teachers should negate suicidal behaviour but emphasize that life is precious.

2. Answer students' questions
 - Students' questions should guide the meeting;
 - Teachers should not give frightening details that are not asked for;
 - Teachers should only provide verified facts;
 - If teachers are uncertain about the answers of the questions, tell the students "I don't know". Clarify and get back to the students if needed;
 - Do not ask the students to recall/ share their crisis experiences.

3. Prepare students for the reactions that may follow crisis exposure
 - Teach common reactions in response to crisis events;
 - State that different people react to the same crisis event in different ways. Normalize and respect different common crisis reactions;
 - Encourage students to seek help when they display enduring warning signs or increased intense reactions.

4. Share with students proper crisis management strategies and channels to seek help
 - Teach adaptive coping strategies (e.g. relaxation techniques, obtaining social support);
 - If the incident involves suicidal behaviors, emphasize that committing suicide is not an appropriate coping strategy;
 - Learn about students' social support network and ensure that they have appropriate support;
 - Share with students channels to seek help, e.g. they can seek help from the school guidance personnel/teacher, teachers, and parents;
 - Encourage students to seek help from family or teachers when they encounter mood disturbances or challenges in life.

5. Observe students' reaction and identify students in need for additional support
 - Identify students who show excessively intense emotional or behavioral reactions (e.g. depression, excessive anger, blaming, etc.);
 - Observe reactions of students who have close relationships with the victim (boyfriend/girlfriend, siblings or "enemies");
 - If the crisis event involves suicide death, pay attention to whether there are students who regard committing suicide as an appropriate way to resolve difficulties;
 - Refer students in need to the school guidance personnel for additional crisis intervention and assistance;
 - Refer to Reference 1 about teachers' responses to students' reactions towards a crisis event.

**Brief Class Meeting/ Special Class Period *:
Teachers' Feedback Form**

Date: _____

Class: _____ Class Teacher : _____

Please complete the following and hand in the duly completed form to _____.

1. Did any student(s) show any emotional reaction or unusual behavior?

Yes (Please list out the name(s) of the student(s))

No

2. Any student(s) in need of follow-up counseling?

Yes (Please list out the name(s) of the student(s))

No

3. What are the views and responses of the students towards this crisis event?

4. Please comment on the following statements about the Brief Class Meeting/ Special Class Period*:

Length of time was appropriate: Agree Disagree

The rundown was smooth: Agree Disagree

Documents & Reference materials are useful: Agree Disagree

Have you encountered any difficulties? (If yes, please state:

_____)

5. Other suggestions/ observations:

* Delete whichever inappropriate

Group Counselling for Students

Targets

Students assessed to be more affected by the crisis event

Objectives

1. Students will have crisis-related questions answered
2. Students will share and ventilate their emotions;
3. Students will learn about common reactions in response to crisis events and warning signs that indicate a need of further support;
4. Students will learn about adaptive coping strategies and channels to seek help;
5. Teachers will identify students in need for additional support

Content

1. Introduce session
 - Facilitator introduces himself/herself;
 - Review group purposes and ground rules, which include mutual respect and compliance to confidentiality issues.

2. Provide crisis facts
 - Share verified facts;
 - Clarify news that are untrue;
 - If the crisis event involves suicide death, facilitator should point out that
 - ✧ the event is under police investigation and it is inappropriate to make any speculation.
 - ✧ Suicide is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple causal pathways and interacting factors and not a single cause or stressor is sufficient to explain a suicidal act in most circumstances;
 - ✧ Facilitator should negate suicidal behaviour but emphasize that life is precious.

3. Answer students' questions
 - Students' questions should guide the meeting;
 - Facilitator should not give frightening details that are not asked for;
 - Facilitator should only provide verified facts;
 - If facilitator is uncertain about the answers of the questions, tell the students "I don't know". Clarify and get back to the students if needed.

4. Share crisis reactions (emotional, cognitive, physiological, social and behavioral

responses)

- Understand students' reactions
 - ✧ Facilitating questions (examples):
 - a. How is your sleep/ appetite?
 - b. Can you concentrate on study?
 - c. How do you feel? What reactions did you experience?
 - Encourage students to share about their thoughts and feelings **at the present moment**. Do not ask them to recall the event or share their crisis experiences. If students start to share about frightening details, guide the students to focus on sharing their reactions **at the present moment**;
 - Teach common reactions in response to crisis events
 - State that different people might have similar experiences and reactions, they are not alone but can offer one another mutual support (if applicable).
 - Encourage students to seek help when they display enduring warning signs or increased intense reactions.
5. Share about adaptive coping strategies;
- Share appropriate coping strategies
 - Practise relaxation techniques and other adaptive coping strategies if appropriate
 - If the incident involves suicidal behaviors, emphasize that committing suicide is not an appropriate coping strategy.
6. Learn about the support network of the students and ensure that they have appropriate support
- Understand students' support network.
 - ✧ Facilitating questions (examples):
 - a. How did your family members react to the crisis event?
 - b. How did they talk with you?
 - c. What do you do to help yourself when you feel disturbed?
 - d. If your negative emotions persist, who would you talk to?
 - e. How would you seek help?
 - Ensure appropriate support
 - ✧ Tell students that you are willing to provide support;
 - ✧ Help students understand their support network, which includes their parents, friends, School Support Team, etc.;
 - ✧ Encourage students to support each other and encourage students to seek help from teachers and social workers when they encounter mood disturbances or great challenges in life. If their peers are experiencing distress, students can refer them to teachers or social worker;

✧ Identify students who are lacking social support for follow-up support.

7. Observe students' reaction and identify students in need of additional crisis intervention and assistance

- Identify students who show excessively intense emotional or behavioral reactions. If the crisis event involves suicide death, pay attention to students who think alike that committing suicide is an appropriate way to solve problems;
- Observe reactions of students who have close relationships with the victim (boyfriend/girlfriend, siblings or "enemies");
- If the event involves suicide death, pay attention to whether there are students who regard committing suicide as an appropriate way to resolve difficulties;
- Refer students in need to the school guidance personnel for additional crisis intervention and assistance;
- Refer to Reference 1 about teachers' responses to students' reactions to a crisis event.

Parent Letter (Sample 1)

Dear Parents,

A very sad thing happened today that I want to share with you. This morning one of our students was hit by a car outside his home residence in (place). He was seriously injured and certified dead at the hospital. We are all very much saddened by the news.

A special announcement has been made to the whole school this morning and we had provided psychoeducation to students. Teachers, school social worker, officers from the Education Bureau and other support personnel jointly supported the students. Counselling services were delivered to those in need so as to help them overcome the difficult period.

This piece of sad news might cause emotional disturbance to your children. Please pay attention to your child's emotional reactions towards this event. We suggest you to allocate time to accompany your child, listen to your child, and allow him/her to talk about his /her thoughts and feelings.

For further assistance, please call your child's class teacher (name and phone number) or school social worker (name and phone number). We are always ready to render additional support.

Yours faithfully,

(xxx)
School Principal

Remarks: You may also refer to the following hotlines for support services

Telephone Hotlines

Social Welfare Department:	2343 2255
Suicide Prevention Services:	2382 0000
The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong:	2389 2222
The Samaritans:	2896 0000 (Multi-lingual services)
Caritas Family Crisis Line:	18288

Parent Letter (Sample 2)

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I inform you about the passing away of one of our students on (date). His/Her sudden death may cause distress and anxiety in our students. The School Crisis Management Team has drawn up an intervention plan and the school social worker/guidance teachers are rendering support and guidance to students in need.

We hope you will pay special attention to your children at such difficult times. You are encouraged to talk with them about their worries and feelings, and show them care and support. If you have any concern, please contact me, the guidance teacher or the school social worker at tel. no.: xxxx xxxx.

Yours faithfully,

(xxx)
School Principal

Remarks: You may also refer to the following hotlines for support services

Telephone Hotlines

Social Welfare Department:	2343 2255
Suicide Prevention Services:	2382 0000
The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong:	2389 2222
The Samaritans:	2896 0000 (Multi-lingual services)
Caritas Family Crisis Line:	18288

Parent Meeting

When necessary, arrange a parent meeting as soon as possible after a crisis. Parents will be concerned about what the school is doing or has done to keep their children safe. You can consider the following agenda for the meeting:

1. Update verified information specific to the crisis.
2. Explain what have been done in response to the crisis and to help those affected.
3. Let parents know what will be done to prevent a similar incident from recurring in future.
4. Present information about the warning signs of suicide (if appropriate).
5. Highlight the “Guidance to Parents on Supporting Children at Time of Crisis” (Reference 2) and ways to help children in grief.
6. Emphasize the importance of supporting children.
7. Emphasize the importance of home-school collaboration.
8. Introduce helping resources and additional professional help if needed.
9. Arrange to meet with parents individually or in group for emotional support.

Press Release (Sample)

(School's Name)

The school was informed by (press/police/parent) on (date) about the passing away of one of our students. The teachers and students were very much saddened by the news.

We cannot offer comments at this stage as the incident is still under police investigation.

In response to this incident, the school has mobilized necessary resources to provide support to students. The School Crisis Management Team, the school social workers, and educational psychologists have offered counselling to students in distress.

The school has also issued a letter to all parents about the incident and they are encouraged to pay special attention to their children and to maintain communication with teachers.

If you have any further enquiry, please contact (name), Principal, at (tel. no.).

(xxx)

School Principal

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Agenda for Evaluation Meeting

1. Evaluate the arrangement, difficulties encountered and effectiveness of the crisis intervention and support work
 - Teachers report students' responses (Teachers' Feedback Form, Appendix 12) ;
 - Staff members share comments with regard to the crisis intervention and support work (Teachers' Feedback Form, Appendix 12).

2. Remind teachers about signs of at-risk students and the importance of ongoing observation and monitoring of students' reactions.

3. Discuss short-term planning
 - Arrange staff to deliver counselling;
 - Arrange support to staff or provide special arrangement, e.g. arrange substitute teacher;
 - Consider the need for additional staff meetings – agenda, time and venue.

4. Discuss long-term planning:
 - Plan for educational activities for the whole school (e.g. suicide prevention activities, guidance/discipline work);
 - Identify training needs of teachers on crisis intervention and support.

Crisis Response Evaluation Questionnaire

Please complete this questionnaire to help us improve our response to crisis event in the future.

Please return this questionnaire to _____ by _____.

Circle 1, 2, 3, or 4 for all applicable items.

		Support from School Crisis Management Team			
		Not Helpful			Very Helpful
		1	2	3	4
1.	Overall Response to Crisis				
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
2.	Support to Students				
	(a) Brief Class Meeting	1	2	3	4
	(b) Special Class Period	1	2	3	4
	(c) Group Counselling	1	2	3	4
	(d) Individual Counselling	1	2	3	4
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
3.	Counseling Support to Staff members				
	(a) Group Counselling	1	2	3	4
	(b) Individual Counselling	1	2	3	4
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
4.	Support to Staff Members				
	(a) Staff Meeting	1	2	3	4
	(b) Information Bulletins and Resources	1	2	3	4
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
5.	Support to Parents	1	2	3	4
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
6.	Handling the Mass Media	1	2	3	4
	Comments:				
<hr/>					
7.	Other Comments				
<hr/>					

Name: _____

Recommended Teachers' Responses to Students' Reactions towards a Crisis Event

Guiding Principles:

- Listen:** Listen to the students and allow them to express their emotions. Be empathetic. Accept different feelings and thoughts expressed by students.
- Understand:** Understand that students react to the same crisis event differently and a lot of their reactions are common crisis reactions.
- Remind:** Difficult moments shall pass. Remind one another to take good care of one self and seek help whenever necessary.

Student Reaction	Teacher Responses
<p>Shock and Denial</p> <p>Initially students may appear remarkably unresponsive to the news of a suicide. They find it difficult to accept the reality of the death.</p>	<p>Teacher needs to assume a stance of anticipatory waiting, acknowledging the shock and demonstrating a willingness to talk when students feel ready.</p>
<p>Anger and Protection</p> <p>Students will look for someone to blame. Anger may be directed at adults in the deceased's life, including staff members. 'Why did they let it happen?'</p>	<p>Teacher can listen to students' feelings. It is sometimes helpful to explain that blame is a common reaction to an event that can't be explained.</p>
<p>Guilt</p> <p>Typically students who have known the deceased may move from blaming others to blaming themselves. 'If only I had talked to him more.'</p>	<p>Teacher can help by reminding students about the limits of personal responsibility.</p>
<p>Anger at the Deceased</p> <p>This is not uncommon, even among those who have not been really close to the deceased. 'How could he be so stupid to do such a thing?'</p>	<p>Allow some expressions of anger. Teachers can point out that feeling angry is common. A simple acknowledgement of this feeling may lessen its intensity.</p>

Guidance to Parents on Supporting Children at Time of Crisis

Children may react to crisis events differently, depending on the degree of exposure, level of emotional/cognitive development, parental response and their personal experiences. Below are some common reactions associated with children who have encountered a crisis event and some ideas about how parents can help.

COMMON CRISIS REACTIONS

Physiological reactions – headaches, stomachaches, muscle tremors, fatigue, sweating, sleep/appetite disturbance

Emotional reactions – shock, denial, fear, sadness, anxiety

Behavioural reactions – restlessness, disorganisation, rebellious at home/school, loss of interest in peer and social activities

School performance – fighting, withdrawal, attention-seeking, poor concentration

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Stay calm and stabilize your own emotion.
- Avoid spreading of rumors. Provide crisis facts and be selective of appropriate information in the news reports for sharing with your child.
- Let your child feel accepted and supported. Respect his/her feelings. They are genuine even if they are different from yours. Never deny or mock a child's fears and worries.
- Listen to your child's concerns and needs. Do not forbid the child to mention or talk about the incident. Suppressing feelings may have aversive effects in the long run.
- Offer opportunities for your child to share what he/she fears and worries most. Discuss arrangements which will make him/her feel more secure, e.g. keeping him/her company, letting him/her go to bed with the light on, etc.
- Encourage your child to express their feelings in different means, such as storytelling, drawing, and doing crafts.
- Do express words of comfort but do not be anxious to give advice. Excessive concern can result in undue stress.

- Encourage your child to continue with normal routines as far as possible.
- Arrange activities that are good for the body and mind, such as listening to music, doing sports and helping child to relax, to encourage your child to focus on other matters.
- Observe and monitor your child's progress. Refer him/her to the teachers or school guidance personnel for follow-up support if necessary.