

Understanding the School Counselor's Role in Crisis Situations

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Characteristics of Effective Schools and Safe/Secure Classrooms

1. Focus on academic achievement and foster enthusiasm for learning.
2. Involve families in meaningful ways.*
3. Develop links to the community.*
4. Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff. Teachers and students learn and use each other's names.*
5. Treat students with equal respect.
6. Discuss safety issues openly.
7. Create ways for students to share their concerns and help students feel safe expressing their feelings.*
8. Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.*
9. Offer extended day programs for children.
10. Promote good citizenship and character, and build a community of learners (using collaboration between students and teachers, school and home).*

Characteristics of Effective Schools and Safe/Secure Classrooms



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11. Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions. Classroom meetings are held to discuss issues and solve problems.
12. Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace.
13. Develop and consistently enforce school-wide rules that are clear, broad-based, and fair.
14. Classroom management includes firm, fair, and consistent rules and procedures.
15. Use of learning centers and the opportunity for cooperative group work.
16. Leisure areas exist for discussions, downtime, and reading.
17. Books and magazines readily available.
18. Displays of students' in-progress and completed work.
19. Plants and objects that assist students in developing an identity of the classroom space as "ours."

Dwyer, Osher, & Wagner (1998) and Strepling (1997)

Evidenced Based Practices in Creating Safe and Successful Schools:



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- **Implement Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS):**
 - MTSS encompasses Universal **screening** for academic, behavioral, and emotional barriers to learning
- **Improve Access to School-Based Mental Health Supports:**
 - School-based counselors **provide early intervention to prevent** or mitigate crisis events;
 - School-based counselors can **provide staff development training** in the area of crisis management;
 - School counselors **support teachers** through **consultation** and **collaboration**.
- **Integrate Services Through Collaboration:**
 - **Collaboration** between **school staff** and **community-based service providers** is critical.
- **Balance Physical and Psychological Safety:**
 - Build trusting, respectful **relationships** between students, staff and families
 - Provide a **confidential method** to **report concerns** (hot line, drop box, etc.)

School Crisis Response Options



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- No Response
 - The event is not traumatic or the crisis reactions can be managed by traditional school resources
- Site-Level Response
 - The event is traumatic, however, student crisis reactions can be handled by school site-level crisis intervention services
- District-Level Response
 - The event is traumatic and may overwhelm school site-level crisis intervention teams
- Mutual Aid Response
 - The event is traumatic and the severity of crisis reactions not only overwhelms school site-level crisis intervention teams, but also district-level crisis teams

What constitutes a crisis?



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- **Acts of war** (e.g., terrorism)
- **Violent deaths** (e.g., active school shooter, fatal illness, homicide, suicide)
- **Criminal acts** (e.g., robbery, child abuse, kidnapping)
- **Unexpected natural deaths** (e.g., heart attack, cancer)
- **Industrial accidents/disasters** (e.g., contaminated water, chemical spills)
- **Natural disasters** (e.g., hurricane, tornado)
- **Severe illnesses** (e.g., cancer)
- **Accidental injuries** (e.g., car accident, burns)

Nuts and Bolts of Crisis Counseling



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1. Attend to the safety, comfort, and other practical life issues first.
2. Begin interventions as soon as possible. However, in disaster situations, counseling may not be appropriate in the first month (Watson, Brymer, & Bonanno, 2011).
3. Model concern, calmness, and competence. Students look to the adults as how to act.
4. Know as many of the facts as possible before beginning counseling.
5. Reflect feeling. This validates their experience and establishes empathic understanding.
6. Help the student understand the crisis has occurred. Work through any denial.
7. Do not encourage or support blaming.
8. Do not give false reassurance. Be truthful and realistic.
9. Recognize the primacy of action. Try to move the student from a victim state to a proactive state.

Sandoval, 2013

Ineffective Interventions



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- Highly restrictive physical safety measures alone (armed security, metal detectors)
- Zero tolerance policies
- SRO's used as a substitute for effective disciplinary policies
- One size fits all interventions
- Generic safety plans
- Unilateral decision making

Typical School Counselor Roles During Crises Situations



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- Crisis Team Co-Leader
- Media Liaison (Seek permission before speaking unless you have been designated to do so. Have all facts first. Don't talk off the record. Get talking points.)
- Provider of individual counseling
- Assist with teacher and classroom issues
- Parent Contact
- Make referrals to community agencies after crisis occurs.

Typical Additional Roles of School Counselors



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- Implement plan for crisis; if support is needed from other schools, talk with principal about contacting district for team
- Maintain active file of helping agencies within the community including the names of contact person(s).
- Assist in creating letters (approved by central office) to notify parents of continuing care that is available to students; available care will include local and state agencies, as well as school-based care; how to talk to children during and about a crisis, etc.
- Develop information sheet for parents, teachers, and others; information will include topics such as the impact of crises on students, signs of stress, and guidelines for dealing effectively with crisis-related stress.
- Assist with planning and conducting parent/community meetings for information dissemination and post-event activities or participate in district website information development.
- Maintain follow-up activities such as referrals for help outside school services.
- Confer with staff and faculty; assist in coordination of briefings for staff and faculty.
- Make recommendations regarding the restarting of school and schedule of activities for the recovery phase.

Evidenced-based Crisis Resources



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- SRO's – as long as they are integrated into school life and school learning
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) [Georgia](#)
- Education of students to “break the code of silence” is one of the most effective safety measures
- [Psychological First Aid](#)
- [PREPaRE Curriculum](#)
- [Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#)
- [Virginia Model for Threat Assessment](#)
- [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools \(CBITS\)](#)
- Extras on handout as well

Crisis Prevention Activities



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- Team should review plan on an annual basis
- Create a safe environment in the school building and in the classrooms
- Professional Learning for staff
- Elements of a social development curriculum that help students cope with a crisis include stress management, awareness and expression of feelings, social problem solving, violence prevention, communication skills, interpersonal/peer relationship skills, and skills for coping with personal loss.
- Have students create their own personal safety plan
- Lesson on bullying prevention strategies taught to students
- Be involved in the community
- Drills

During a Crisis



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- Get factual information about the crisis. If the crisis involves a student or staff death, find out what facts the family wishes to have shared.
- If it is a building crisis, the principal notifies the district office. If it is a district crisis, get instructions from the district office.
- Call the Crisis Management Team together. Decide which personnel from other buildings and the community should be contacted for assistance.
- The Crisis Management Team reviews roles and responsibilities.
- Develop an official statement for use with the phone tree.
- Implement the phone tree; the official statement should be read during each call.
- Arrange for a faculty meeting to take place before the day begins, if possible.
- Arrange for procedures and space for students to access counseling. Gather materials to comfort students (e.g., water, tissues, paper, pens, markers, stress balls)
- Arrange for extra supervision in hallways and bathrooms for comfort and safety.

During a Crisis

- Arrange a location for staff to receive necessary attention. Make sure a member of the Crisis Management Team (a counselor is preferable) is assigned to the staff room.
- Arrange for relief of staff as needed (e.g., Is there someone in place who can relieve the staff member from duty? Is a substitute needed?).
- Consider what food would be necessary for the various groups (e.g., Will the cafeteria be open? Can a parent organization provide food for faculty?).
- The Crisis Management Plan coordinator, with the assistance of the media spokesperson, should write, or designate a person to write, a letter to parents with facts about the incident. Students should take those letters home the first day of the crisis.
- If coverage/supervision of classrooms is needed for staff/students to attend services, those arrangements should be made according to district policy/procedure.
- Implement the Crisis Management Plan.
- Arrange for a faculty meeting at the end of the day to debrief.
- Crisis Management Team meets to debrief and to plan next steps.
- Before the Crisis Management Team dismisses, check on the emotional stability of the team members

Postvention Crisis Activities



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- Being seen and interacting with students and serving as a backup for teachers.
- Coordinating a partnership with community resources.
- Having good communication with parents.
- Having a crisis team leader from the district come to the school following death of a student to provide specific instructions to the students and their stakeholders. Specific directions included informing the students in this child's classroom, answering parent questions, and serving as a host to other school counselors who came to provide assistance.
- Providing defusing and debriefing activities.
- Providing group and individual counseling.
- Setting up a "crisis room" for students needing assistance.
- Having the plan in place and practiced so that everyone was aware of their role.

Professional Learning for Faculty/Staff



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- Warning Signs of Various Actions
- De-escalation Techniques
- What to do in a _____ situation? (bullying, harassing, verbal report of a situation)
- Suicide Awareness Training (required by law HB 198: Jason Flatt Act 2015)
- Positive Relationships With Parents
- Stress Management
- Youth Behaviors
- What's in OUR Community?
- [Staff Training on Crisis Plan](#) (role play)

Resources



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Model Crisis Plans

- [Virginia](#)
- [US Department of Education](#)
 - [Georgia](#)
 - [Kansas](#)
 - [Colorado](#)
 - [Missouri](#)
- [Fairfax County Public Schools](#)
- [San Francisco Unified School District](#)
- [Broward County Schools, FL](#)
- [Worthington School District](#)
- [UCLA Research and Forms](#)

Grief Resources

- [Tip Sheets and Other Organizations](#)
- [Children's Grief Education Association](#)
- [School Crisis and Bereavement](#)
- [Coping with the Sudden Death of a Student](#)
- www.grievingstudents.org
- [Guidelines for Responding to the Death of a Student or School Staff](#)
- [*After a Loved one dies: How children grieve and how parents and other adults can support them*](#)

Tips for Assisting in Crisis Situations (Self-Care)



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- Keep your life in balance.
 - Eat well and get plenty of exercise. A good diet and exercise is important when under stress.
 - Balance work and rest.
 - Stick to a schedule as much as you can. It provides stability and the comfort of a normal routine when your feelings are out of control.
 - Avoid new major projects or decisions.
- Be realistic about what you can do.
- Recognize and acknowledge your own feelings of loss and grief.
- Give yourself permission to mourn. No matter what the nature of your relationship, there is loss. Give yourself the same latitude you give your students.
- Meet with fellow Crisis Team members and be supportive of each other or form a support group with fellow counselors or staff members.
- Be kind to yourself. You don't have to "get it all together" right away. You don't have to do it all, be strong for everyone, or take care of everything. Treat yourself with the same gentleness and understanding you would anybody else.
- Debrief with the Crisis Team members and/or administration before going home.

In a Nutshell



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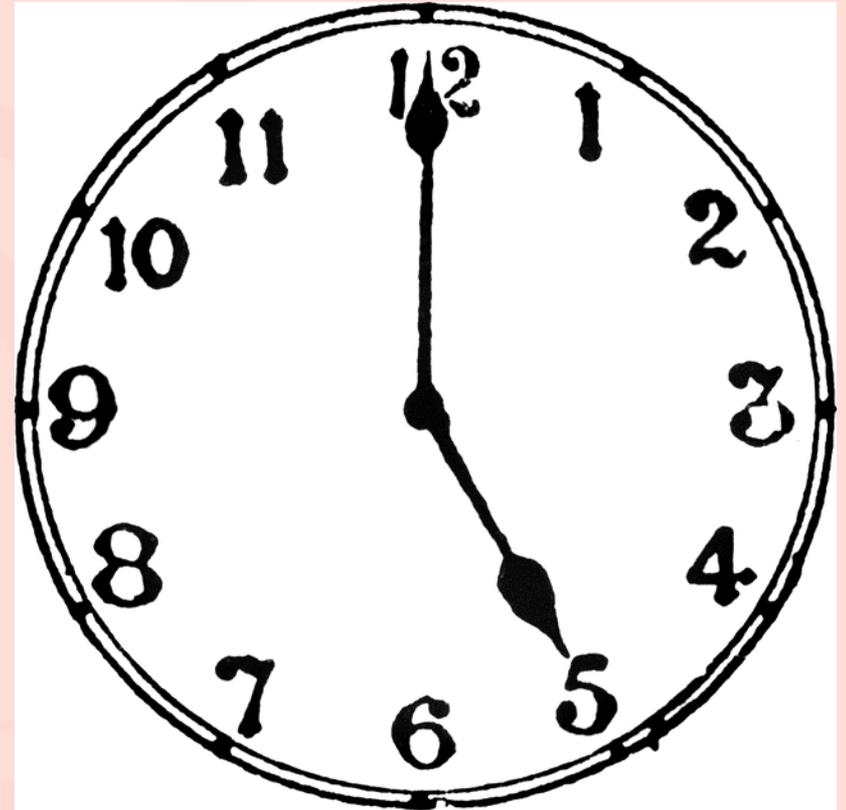
- Serve on Crisis Response Team
- Be familiar with and follow school and/or district procedures
- Make sure crisis plan is reviewed annually
- Have a list of community resources available
- Build a strong relationship with students so they'll come and tell you when something doesn't seem right
- If you don't know, ASK.

Crises After School Hours



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- 9-1-1
- Emergency Numbers near ALL school phones
- Instruct staff on what to do if they have a concern overnight or over the weekend



COME EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC

SUMMER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

May 31, June 1, June 2

Macon Centreplex – Macon, GA - 8:15 AM – 3:00 PM

Lunch will be provided.

Hotel block available at Macon Marriott for \$109 per night.

(Reference CTAE Resource Network when booking.)

TO REGISTER:

1. Visit **www.ctaern.org** Login info: First three letters of last name and last four digits of SSN
2. Workshop Catalog
3. Workshop Categories (upper right)
4. Guidance/Career Development
5. Click "Register" tab to register for the desired summer workshop(s) you would like to attend.
6. An email confirmation will be sent to you after successfully registering for each the workshop.

Get ready for a Top Hat Magical Summer.....
Abracadabra...Ayla kazoo
This summer will be magical because of all the great updates the Georgia Department of Education has in store for you!
Each show will leave you wanting more because each show is filled with

MAGIC!

Appearing June 1 & June 2
8:15 AM — 3:00 PM
(CHOOSE ONE DAY)



DAVE WEBER

“Sticks & Stones exposed: The Truth Behind
Words & Relationships”
(Culture & Climate)

...ation zeroes in on the power
... impact they have on the
... of a school. What kind of
... words creating? One in which
... ssuals strive to work as a strong
... am for the sake of the children... or one that is
... breeding an inability to trust and work together.
Discover how to transform your classroom and
your relationships and how to build a great
“community” within your school and your family.
*Additional sessions by Dave Weber scheduled
throughout the summer through CTAERN.

Intended Audience:
Elementary, Middle, High
8:15 AM—3:00 PM

Appearing May 31, June 1 & June 2
8:15AM — 12:00 PM
(CHOOSE ONE DAY)



GREG MANNING

Career Exploration for Young Champs

This interactive workshop teaches a full range of
energy, motivation, and strategies
exercises will discuss and exercises
and exercises leading
students... It's
never too...
We... that chef.
high... middle and
prod... thinking about a
... ary students should
their... opportunity to dream about
counselor... just need you, their school
counselor... there to open up a whole new
world of career opportunities.

Elementary

Intended Audience:
Elementary
8:15 AM—12:00 PM
Participate in Main Event from 12-3

Appearing May 31, June 1, & June 2
8:15 AM — 3:00 PM
(CHOOSE ONE DAY)



LYNN ANDERSON

Counseling and Economic Development

This full-day workshop offers Georgia middle
and high school counselors what they need to
know about the 21st century workforce
... This professional
... describing the “new
... research and skills are now
... graduates and in their
... The workshop then
workforce development agencies. Counselors are
encouraged to invite their building administrator
to participate in this session.

MS/
HS

Intended Audience:
Middle and High
8:15 AM—3:00 PM

The **MAIN EVENT** will happen on May 31, June 1, and June 2.

Counselors are encouraged to choose the day that works best for them. Lunch will be provided for all sessions.

A few of the highlights for the **MAIN EVENT** are:

- “Move On When Ready” Updates
- Updates from Various State Agencies
- Legislative Updates that Impact School Counselors
 - The Future of Career Planning in Georgia

Intended Audience:

Middle and High School Counselors (8:15AM - 3:00 PM) & Elementary School Counselors (12:00 PM — 3:00 PM)

All
Levels



Elementary



5th Grade
Portfolios
Best Practices

2:00 PM

Upon completion of today's webinar, please click here to complete an evaluation. Thanks!!

High



Academic Achievement
Initiatives
11:00 AM

MOWR Course Numbers
Updates
Tuesday, March 22
10:00 AM

Articulation: A Great Option for
Offering MOWR to Students
Thursday, March 24
10:00 AM

MARCH WEBINARS

REGISTER TODAY!! DON'T DELAY!!

Click on the session's topic to register.

