

Crisis Response: An Administrator's Perspective

What are the elements of an effective crisis team?

- People vs. Process
- What are the characteristics that you most value in crisis team members?
 - Calm and collected
 - Good listener
 - Know when to lead and be lead

What do you do first when faced with a crisis situation?

Upon notification of incident:

- Secure campus quickly – inform SRO/Police to secure campus
- Inform Superintendent, District Office, other Admins
- Assess and identify immediate needs/circle of influences (Friends/students, staff, community members)
- Based on timing of incident email staff (emergency staff meeting) – Pull aside immediate teachers to separate room
- Transportation Department – coordinate response/other siblings at dismissal
- See who can stay – assess immediate and often weekend needs
- Do not release name of student to public – Police confirm and publicize
- Contact Regional Crisis Team – based on situation – What if counselor dies? You may lose your own team (EAP, County Mental Health, other schools building subs, be specific)
- Check other schools siblings/employee connections (SMS other contacts)
- Develop/Keep ongoing list of possibly fragile staff with similar situations/history

As incident unfolds:

- Control the communication – **script** response to calls – Identical response is critical and prepare for phones to ring off hook
- Document everything – have a secretary follow you (times, names, job, red sweater, blue striped tie)
- Ensure clear documentation of messages received and phone numbers for return calls (repeat the # back to the person)
- Outside contacts – coaches, religious groups, afterschool clubs “Family Tree” Mentality, other siblings, other schools
- Check both personal and district calendar of events
- Clear communication for building needs to custodians (bathrooms, cafeteria)
- Consistently comb LoHud/news outlets
- Check your emergency communication system – did you take the family off the list for any emails or robo-calls that will be sent out to District regarding updates, services, etc.
- Check the SMS for robo-calls/tardy, check with librarian for overdue books, student’s future schedule and mailings, etc.
- One point of contact for family – find a friend
- Call your husband/wife – daycare issues
- Charge cell phone
- Have someone order pizza/water – credit card at the ready

During and Throughout Incident:

- Send those that don't do well to get materials – i.e. buy water, get paper, clean tables, etc.
- Prepare letters – immediate, next day, funeral services (Could be 1st for many)
- Coordinate District response extra staff, times building open, etc. in days to come (Doodle calendar)
- Collect student work / grades / mementos and save everything
- Clean/collect student locker items and save everything
- Provide paper, markers, 'butcher' paper, photos for students to use in cafeteria for grieving
- Set schedule of upcoming and weekend events and coverage (i.e. teachers, school psychologist, social worker, etc.)

Immediately after Incident/ (Recovery):

- Discuss future events with Parents – Yearbook, graduation, moving up, NJHS/NHS ceremony
- Remember to notify next grade level and/or school (Middle to HS or Elem. to Middle)
- Flag SMS for District notification (Siblings, friends, other family members in system)

Who do you rely most upon in a crisis situation?

- Secretary, Head Custodian(furniture moved), local law enforcement, closest person in students "Network" (sports coaches, past teachers)
- Other admins with similar experiences – especially if there is a small admin team
- Realize you might have to manage those that have little value added i.e. VIP's that mean well, but only add political capital to conversation (BOE President, Union President, Superintendent, Town Councilperson)