

SCHOOL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE



Revised: April 2015

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EMERGENCY & RESOURCE PHONE NUMBERS

“I’m dealing with a critical incident. I need to speak with _____
immediately”

Contact	Emergency Number
Police / Fire / Ambulance	911
School District Board Office	250-475-4162
Deputy/Associate Superintendent _____	_____
School Liaison Officer _____	_____
NEED Youth Help Line	250-310-1234
Greater Victoria Police Victim Services	250-995-7351
Kids’ Help Phone Line	1-800-668-6868
BC Hydro	1-888-769-3766
Fortis BC – gas leaks & odours	1-800-663-9911
Poison Control	1-800-567-8911
Discovery Youth and Family Addictions	250-519-5313
MCFD, Youth Services	250-953-3711
MCFD, Child and Youth Mental Health	250-387-9747
Need 2 Suicide Prevention and Support	778-783-0177
Living and Learning Through Loss	250-413-3114

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ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

SUPERINTENDENT/DEPUTY/ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENTS

Superintendent

- ❑ Obtain details of the situation from the school Principal or designate.
- ❑ Consult with the School Principal and District Critical Incident Team Coordinator to determine appropriate support response.
- ❑ Communicate with the Deputy/Associate Superintendent of the school involved.
- ❑ Where applicable for assessment of the situation, consult necessary authorities, e.g. police, community agencies, lawyers.
- ❑ Communicate with all schools that may be impacted because of involvement of students from other schools, peer connections, attendance of siblings of victim, previous attendance by the victim, etc.
- ❑ Communicate with the Director of Facilities if maintenance personnel working at the school may be at risk or if the school building is damaged.
- ❑ Communicate with the Board Chair, or others, as appropriate.
- ❑ Prepare a statement for the media, or designate someone to speak to the media, on behalf of the District.

Deputy/Associate Superintendents

- ❑ Obtain details of the situation from the school Principal or designate.
- ❑ Consult with the school Principal and District Critical Incident Team Coordinator to determine appropriate support response.
- ❑ Immediately inform the Superintendent of Schools.
- ❑ After consultation with the Superintendent, and where applicable for assessment of the situation, consult necessary authorities, e.g. police, community agencies, lawyers.
- ❑ Communicate with all schools that may be impacted because of involvement of students from other schools, peer connections, attendance of siblings of victim, previous attendance by the victim, etc.
- ❑ Communicate with the Director of Facilities if maintenance personnel working at the school may be at risk or if the school building is damaged.
- ❑ After consultation with the Superintendent, communicate with the Board Chair or others as appropriate.
- ❑ After consultation with the Superintendent, prepare a statement for the media or designate someone to speak to the media on behalf of the District.

Refer to [Responding To Critical Incidents: A Resource Guide For Schools](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf)
(<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf>) for further details.

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DISTRICT CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

CIRT - provides support to schools and families in dealing with critical incidents through a provision of expertise, resources and additional counselling.

Team Members: 2014-2015

Heather Benson - Reynolds

Matt Staples

Dana Marchant

Wanda Murphy

Kim Sholinder

Joel Smith

Deb Whitten - contact: 250-475-4155

Roles and Responsibilities

- ❑ Consult with school and district administration to determine appropriate support response.
- ❑ Support the School Critical Incident Response Team through phone consultation or on-site service.
- ❑ Provide on-site debriefing for staff, students and parents/guardians, as required.
- ❑ Provide information and resources for staff, students and parents/guardians.
- ❑ Assist in planning for follow-up support.
- ❑ Connect schools with appropriate community resources.
- ❑ Provide ongoing updates to district administration throughout the response.
- ❑ Debrief with district administration following a response in order to refine CIRT practices.

Contact can be made through your Deputy/Associate Superintendent or directly with the District Principal, Student Services.

Employee Assistance: Homewood 1-800-663-1142

Refer to Responding To Critical Incidents: A Resource Guide For Schools
(<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf>) for further details.

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SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/VICE PRINCIPALS

- ❑ Call 911, if appropriate, with as much information as possible (see emergency telephone response checklist – pages 13 & 14).
- ❑ Gather and verify preliminary information about the incident.
- ❑ Phone the Superintendent of Schools or Deputy/Associate Superintendent. Ensure accurate information is passed on (see emergency telephone response checklist – pages 13 & 14). Leave a number where you can be reached at all times.
- ❑ Determine, in consultation with the Superintendent or Deputy/Associate Superintendent, what support may be required (District Critical Incident Response Team, community services).
- ❑ Provide admin assistant with informational script to be shared with parents/guardians and community.
- ❑ Direct media to the Superintendent's Office, 250-475-4162.
- ❑ Activate School Critical Incident Response Team and determine what needs to be done by whom.
- ❑ Arrange for a staff meeting to pass on information and outline the plan for handling the situation.
- ❑ Make note of staff who are having difficulty handling the news and may need short term TOC relief.
- ❑ Write a script for classroom teachers or counsellors to read to students informing them of the situation. Ensure that students do not leave the school without this information.
- ❑ Write a letter to parents/guardians, if appropriate, to inform them of the incident and what the school is doing in response.
- ❑ Set up gathering places/counselling centres, if appropriate.
- ❑ Contact staff who are absent from school to inform them of the incident.
- ❑ Develop a plan for immediate and follow-up support, including access of district/community resources, if appropriate.

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OFFICE STAFF

Office Staff

Under the direction of the school administrator:

- ❑ Call 911, using the Emergency Telephone Response Checklist as a guide.
- ❑ Follow directions of administration.
- ❑ Obtain and follow a script from the school administrator to guide response to calls from parents/guardians and the community. Pass along ONLY information approved by administrator.
- ❑ Direct media to the Superintendent's Office.
- ❑ Copy and distribute letters to go home to parents/guardians, as directed by the administrator.

In the event that the school administration is not available, share this checklist with the Teacher in Charge (TIC) and:

- ❑ Call 911, using the Emergency Telephone Response Checklist as a guide.
- ❑ Call your school's Deputy/Associate Superintendent or the Superintendent to provide information, using the Emergency Protocol Form as a guide.
- ❑ Get an informational script from District administration to be shared with parents/guardians and community.
- ❑ Direct media to Superintendent's Office, 250 475-4162.
- ❑ Call the school counsellor and request his/her assistance.
- ❑ Upon return of a school administrator, provide an accurate account of what has occurred to that point and follow further direction.
- ❑ Keep notes of what has been done and of any questions arising from the situation.

Refer to Responding To Critical Incidents: A Resource Guide For Schools
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SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

- ❑ Respond to the school administrator's call.
- ❑ Develop a plan of action.
- ❑ Determine roles and responsibilities.
- ❑ Implement an appropriate action plan that may include:
 - Communicating with staff.
 - Reassigning responsibilities of those most closely affected by the incident.
 - Completing an impact and needs assessment of staff and students.
 - Planning counselling services and setting up counselling areas.
 - Implementing plans for support for staff.
 - Talking with students.
 - Informing parents/guardians.
 - Reviewing team performance after the critical incident is over.
 - Developing a plan for long-term support and monitoring.

The District Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) will be made available as quickly as possible if requested by the school administrator in consultation with an Associate/Deputy Superintendent.

Employee Assistance: Homewood 1-800-663-1142

Refer to [Responding To Critical Incidents: A Resource Guide For Schools](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf)
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SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

- ❑ Report to the administrator(s) at the school involved.
- ❑ Meet as part of School Critical Incident Response Team.
- ❑ Attend emergency staff meeting.
- ❑ Assist teachers in the delivery of script informing students of the incident, as needed.
- ❑ Coordinate counselling services for students, staff and parents/guardians, as needed.
- ❑ Monitor counselling services as the day unfolds.
- ❑ Compile a list of at-risk students.
- ❑ Develop a list of community resources available to support student needs.
- ❑ Assist in the development of a plan for long-term support services for students, staff, and parents/guardians, as needed.
- ❑ Seek support from the District Critical Response Team, as needed.

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STAFF

- ❑ Send staff or student to the office to inform school administration of incident and to get assistance.
- ❑ When dealing with students, handle the situation calmly yet clearly, keeping personal safety paramount.
- ❑ Model control through calm, decisive directions; do not demand it through ultimatums.
- ❑ Attend staff meetings to ensure accurate, updated information is received.
- ❑ Read administrator's script to students informing them of incident. If this is too difficult, as for school counsellor or district critical incident response team member to assist with this. Pass on information only if it has been confirmed as fact.
- ❑ Lead a class discussion, as appropriate.
- ❑ Alert School Critical Incident Response Team or counsellors of any students who seem vulnerable or at-risk.
- ❑ Contact parents/guardians of at-risk students if requested to do so by the counselling team or administrator.
- ❑ Direct all inquiries to the school Principal/Vice Principal.
- ❑ Document incident where appropriate.
- ❑ Reflect on personal needs and seek support as needed.
- ❑ Ask for help from school team.

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AFTER AN INCIDENT

The importance of the development of a plan to provide both immediate and follow-up support to students and staff following a traumatic incident cannot be over-stated.

This plan should:

- ❑ Help staff, parents/guardians and students understand how youth react to critical incidents;
- ❑ Help staff members deal with their own reactions to the critical incident/loss through debriefing and support services;
- ❑ Help students and families adjust after the critical incident/loss through the provision of both immediate and follow-up support;
- ❑ Connect students and families to community resources where support beyond that which the school can offer is needed;
- ❑ Help victims and family members of victims re-enter the school environment;
- ❑ Help students and staff address the return of a student removed because of an incident.

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911 TELEPHONE GUIDE

“Do you want police, fire or ambulance?”

(Remember that the appropriate emergency service is dispatched immediately, as you are speaking.)

POLICE

<input type="checkbox"/> What town/city ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there weapons involved?
<input type="checkbox"/> What school/location ? Give your specific location at that site.	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there injuries requiring medical attention?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is your name and position ? Are you a witness or is this report third hand?	<input type="checkbox"/> What are the details of the incident?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is the incident ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of key individuals (height, weight, hair colour, skin colour, clothing, oddities)
<input type="checkbox"/> How many people are involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of any vehicles involved (license plate, colour, make, markings such as dents, bumper stickers)

FIRE

<input type="checkbox"/> What is the address ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any injuries ?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is your name ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any people trapped in the building?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is your location and the exact location of the fire ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any exposures (structures close to the building that could catch fire)?
<input type="checkbox"/> What is the nature of the fire ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any explosives or accelerants involved?

AMBULANCE

<input type="checkbox"/> What town/city ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the patient conscious ?
<input type="checkbox"/> What school/location ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the patient breathing ?
<input type="checkbox"/> Where is the ambulance needed?	<input type="checkbox"/> If it is an illness: Is there chest pain ?
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a phone number there?	<input type="checkbox"/> If it is an injury: What is the site of the injury ?
<input type="checkbox"/> What type of emergency is this? (Car accident, illness, fall)	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there bleeding ? Is it under control?
<input type="checkbox"/> Approximate age of patient?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any medical conditions that you are aware of?

On site phone number/s _____ Cell number/s _____

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AFTER CALLING 911
CALL SUPERINTENDENT/DEPUTY/ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENTS OFFICE
REPORTING MAJOR ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT

Major accidents or incidents should be reported immediately to the Superintendent of Schools – 250-475-4159 – or your Deputy/Associate Superintendent. When calling, please make it clear that this is an emergency.

“I am phoning to report a MAJOR emergency involving students/staff.

Please transfer me immediately to: _____ (the Superintendent of Schools)”.

The following information will be important:

- Name and position.
- Where are you calling from? Give location (facility and room or area of building).
- How can you be contacted? Cell _____ on site phone _____
- Briefly describe incident (facts only).
- Where did the incident occur? How long ago?
- Are the police and emergency services already involved?
- How many students in total do you think are at the accident/disaster site?
- Are any students injured?
- Where are the students who are not injured? **It is important to keep them together.**
- Have you any injured staff? How many staff are in attendance today? Are you injured?
- Are there volunteers in attendance **today** in your building/in the vehicle? Injuries?
- Are there any school district staff; other than you, in attendance who are able to assist now?
- Who has taken charge? **The person in charge should ensure that no students leave the scene.**
- Who have you contacted?
- Are members of the media already at the scene? Have you, or anyone else, made any comments?

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SITUATIONS

Each year, some of our schools are impacted by serious events over which they have no control. Student, staff, and parent deaths have a significant impact on our school communities, as can incidents which evoke fear or anxiety. As the emotional well-being and achievement of our students can both be compromised by such events, it is important that we are knowledgeable and prepared to respond. Effectively dealing with such situations and their aftermaths will reduce the impact on our students and help our schools to recover and to build resiliency.

Protocols could not possibly be outlined for every emergency situation. The professional judgment of the administrator will always be important in determining actions.

LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

A “**Lockdown**” should **only** be used when there is a major incident or threat of school violence within the school, or in relation to the school.

****Note: After any lockdown, a communication should go out to parents/guardians briefly outlining the situation and how it was handled. This will ensure that accurate information goes home and that parents/guardians can support their children if they have questions or concerns.**

Parents should wait for information from the school district before coming to the school.

HOLD AND SECURE PROCEDURES

“**Hold and Secure**” should be used when it is desirable to secure the school due to an ongoing situation outside and not related to the school (e.g. a robbery occurs near a school, a chemical spill occurs in the neighbourhood, a cougar has been sighted in the neighbourhood). In this situation, the school continues to function normally, with the exterior doors being locked until such time as the situation near the school is resolved.

****Note: After any Hold and Secure, a communication should go out to parents/guardians briefly outlining the situation and how it was handled. This will ensure that accurate information goes home and that parents/guardians can support their children if they have questions or concerns.**

ABDUCTION

- ❑ **Suspected:**
 - Verify that the student is missing and possibly abducted by searching the building and grounds.
 - Question student's friends to obtain information about when and where the student was last seen.
 - Call parents/guardians to obtain information, such as last known whereabouts, clothing worn, identifying features, etc.
 - Call 911.
- ❑ **Attempted:**
 - Ensure that an adult stays with the student involved to provide emotional support and reassurance.
 - Gather as much information as possible from the student and witnesses.
 - Call 911.
 - Inform parents/guardians.
- ❑ **Confirmed:**
 - Call 911 (with as much information as possible).
 - Inform parents/guardians.
- ❑ Call Superintendent or Deputy/Associate Superintendent.
- ❑ Meet with staff as soon as possible and advise teachers on sharing information with students.
- ❑ Talk to students about safe travel practices between home and school.
- ❑ Identify students at risk and provide counselling.
- ❑ With police, develop a fact sheet to respond to telephone inquiries.
- ❑ Direct all media to the Superintendent's office, 250-475-4162.
- ❑ Send a letter home to all parents/guardians outlining facts, as known, and alerting them to any possible concerns, as well as school/police initiatives and ways they can support their children.
- ❑ Develop a plan for immediate and follow-up support for students.

Refer to [Responding To Critical Incidents: A Resource Guide for Schools](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf) (<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf>) for further details.

STUDENT ACCIDENT ON A FIELD TRIP

ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF TAKING STUDENTS ON FIELD TRIPS CARRY THE PHONE NUMBERS (HOME AND CELL) OF THEIR ADMINISTRATORS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS. STAFF SHOULD KNOW TO IMMEDIATELY CALL AND PERSONALLY SPEAK TO A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR IF A SERIOUS ACCIDENT OCCURS.

ADMINISTRATORS WILL THEN:

- ❑ Gather preliminary information about the accident (location, description of accident, emergency personnel involved, number of students involved, seriousness of injuries, names of students, their condition, if known, and the name of the hospital receiving the injured).
- ❑ Establish a contact person and a number at the site of the accident where that person can be reached at all times. Establish a back-up plan if phone contact cannot be made (e.g. alternate contact number).
- ❑ Notify the Superintendent of Schools or your Deputy/Associate Superintendent of the accident.
- ❑ Meet with all of your school's administrators to formulate an initial plan to handle the incident and assign responsibilities. Decide whether to request one of the administrators to attend the scene. If the accident is serious or involves casualties, it is advisable to do this, if at all possible.
- ❑ Direct all media inquiries to the Superintendent's Office.
- ❑ Request involvement of District Critical Incident Response Team, if appropriate.
- ❑ Notify staff.
- ❑ Provide the staff handling the telephone with a script to share with parents/guardians and the community.
- ❑ Notify parents/guardians of the students on the trip. Give them only verified information and invite them to meet at the school for further information.
- ❑ Contact PAC President to inform him/her of the accident.
- ❑ Establish a room for parents/guardians in which to meet and ensure an administrator or Critical Incident Team member is present to provide information on an ongoing basis. Provide separate rooms for parents/guardians of critically injured student(s).
- ❑ Establish a room for students who turn up at the school. Ensure that there is a staff person who can provide information and monitor their needs.
- ❑ Arrange for a staff meeting to pass on information and outline the plan for handling the situation.
- ❑ Write a statement informing students of the accident. This statement could be delivered by classroom teachers, counsellors or administrators. Ensure that students do not leave the school without this information.

- Write a letter to parents/guardians, if appropriate, informing them of facts about the accident, support provided by school and ways they can support their children.
- Develop a plan for immediate and follow-up support for students and staff.

*If staff related please follow WorkSafe process and contact Health and Safety Advisor

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(<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/critinc.pdf>) for further details.

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DANGEROUS GOODS SPILL

- ❑ When a chemical is spilled in a school building, evacuate the room and block access.
- ❑ Call 911 if fumes are present or if students/staff have been in contact with the chemical or are injured.
- ❑ Close the door and put up a warning sign indicating the presence of spill and substance (i.e. Mercury).
- ❑ Use caution tape and plastic sheeting to barricade open areas.
- ❑ Custodian should notify Facilities of the nature of the spill and for further directions regarding clean-up or authority to contact (fire, gas).
- ❑ Contact District Health and Safety Advisor.
- ❑ Contact Custodian and/or Facilities to shut off the ventilation system.
- ❑ If you decide to evacuate the building, follow regular evacuation procedures. Determine wind direction, walk (don't run) to an area crosswind from the spill – not in line with the spill.
- ❑ Direct students and staff to an assembly area well out of danger.
- ❑ When assembled, take attendance. Account for every person. Notify Superintendent of location and await further instructions.
- ❑ If the effects of the spill will be long-lasting, use phone tree/synrevoice to notify parents/guardians of when and where to pick up their children.
- ❑ Use sign-out release procedure.

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DEATH OF A STUDENT

At School – Call 911

- ❑ Remove onlookers by directing students back to classrooms, if possible.
- ❑ Call next of kin and inform them that an emergency has taken place. Direct them to go to the school or specified hospital, as appropriate. Ensure that someone meets them when they arrive.
- ❑ Call the Superintendent.
- ❑ Communicate the nature of the incident to staff and direct them to contain students in classrooms.
- ❑ Follow procedures for all situations below.
- ❑ Ensure documentation is complete.

Out of School

- ❑ Confirm details.
- ❑ Inform the Deputy/Associate Superintendent of Schools.
- ❑ Meet with staff to inform them of the death. If possible, do this before school starts so that staff have a chance to process the information before going to their classrooms.

All Situations

- ❑ Assemble School Critical Incident Response Team.
- ❑ Call District Critical Incident Response Team, 250-475-4155, if appropriate.
- ❑ Prepare a script for office staff to share with parents/guardians and community members who call or drop in.
- ❑ Prepare a script to be read to students by classroom teachers, counsellors, or critical incident team members.
- ❑ Contact family. Express sympathy, both personally and on behalf of the school. Sensitively confirm what information about the death may be shared. Be aware of multicultural sensitivity (see chart attached).
- ❑ Write a letter to inform parents/guardians, if appropriate, of the facts about the death, support provided by the school and ways for parents/guardians to support their children.
- ❑ Organize a drop-in centre for students, if appropriate.
- ❑ Hold a staff meeting as soon as possible (recess or lunch) to provide updated information, gather information on how students are doing and check on well-being of staff.
- ❑ Contact staff who are absent from school to inform them of the death.

- ❑ If appropriate, share information about funeral arrangements with staff and students.
- ❑ When appropriate, encourage return to a normal day.
- ❑ Monitor student reaction, request additional counsellors, if necessary.
- ❑ Monitor social networking sites (Facebook, etc.), if possible.
- ❑ Have counsellors connect students/parents/guardians with community resources, as appropriate.
- ❑ Develop a plan for immediate and follow-up support for students and staff.
- ❑ Direct staff members to remove student's name from computer, attendance and mailing lists.
- ❑ Involve family and/or close peers of the deceased in the plan for clearing the student's locker, desk, and personal effects.

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EARTHQUAKE

During the Actual Earthquake:

- If indoors**, stay indoors beneath sturdy furniture, beside a solid inside wall, or inside an inner hallway. Do not stand in a doorway.
- Stay away from windows and stay away from heavy objects that can fall from ceilings, shelves and cupboards, or top-heavy furniture that could tip over.
- Never use an elevator.
- Don't use candles, matches or open flame.
- Don't run through or near buildings where debris could fall on you.
- If outdoors**, stay in the open, away from trees, buildings and power lines.

Classroom Instructions:

At the first sign of an earthquake, the teacher instructs: "Earthquake – drop and cover".

Drop and cover as follows:

- i. **Drop** to the ground (before the earthquake drops you!)
 - ii. Take **Cover** by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and
 - iii. **Hold on** to it until the shaking stops.
- Remain quiet and calm. Listen for instructions from the teacher.
 - In unison, count to 60 seconds.
 - Wait 10 seconds (again counting to 10 in unison).
 - Count for another 60-seconds to allow for aftershock.
 - If the shaking has stopped and no instructions are heard immediately after the two 60 second count sessions, the teacher will:
 - i. Confirm that all students are safe.
 - ii. Have students shuffle over to put on coats and line up to vacate.
 - iii. If everyone is vacating, hang the 'CLEAR' sign on the doorknob.
 - iv. Should anyone be too injured to transport, hang the 'INJURY' sign on the classroom doorknob or in window.
 - v. Have designated student carry the earthquake backpack.
 - vi. Vacate the building, using the safest route possible.
 - vii. Evacuate immediately if there is a fire or gas leak; otherwise, evacuate SLOWLY and CAUTIOUSLY to be safe.
 - viii. If you are unable to evacuate, hang the 'HELP' sign in the window.
 - Once buddy classes are partnered in designated area, adults will assume their earthquake duty roles.

- Send Classroom Status Forms to Command Centre.
- Once preliminary information is gathered, contact Superintendent using phone, or if not working, radio.

- Students in hallways or washrooms must drop and cover until the shaking has stopped and remain where they are until someone comes to get them.
- For students who are with an Education Assistant (EA) outside of the classroom, they must remain with the EA until they get to the designated meeting area, where they will return to their classroom teacher.

After the Shaking:

- Make sure no debris is hanging over building exits. After exits have been inspected, evacuate building and move well away from it. Keep students in groups and under control. Take attendance and make sure no one is missing.
- If electricity is shorting, turn off power at primary source. Should water pipes leak, turn off water at primary source. Natural gas will shut down automatically with shaker valve. The gas company must be called before gas can be turned back on. Open doors and windows to ventilate rooms in areas near leak. Report all leaks to school administrators. Stay out of building until gas utility officials indicate it is safe to return.
- Inform Superintendent's office, 250 475-4162. Wait for special instructions.
- Stay out of damaged buildings until it is determined that they are safe to re-enter.
- Be wary of after-shocks. They may occur as early as a few minutes after the initial shock.
- Set up student release station and other centres, i.e. first aid triage, shelter, food & water and morgue, as necessary.

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FIRE

- ❑ **Sound the fire alarm.** Do not attempt to put out any fire, no matter how small.
- ❑ Confirm location of fire.
- ❑ **Call 911.**
- ❑ Evacuate students from building, using nearest safe exit.
- ❑ Assemble outside the building in a safe area, keeping clear of fire lanes.
- ❑ Take attendance. Report names and possible locations of missing students to Principal.
- ❑ Call Superintendent's Office 250-475-4162.
- ❑ Inform fire department of names, ages and possible locations of unaccounted-for students and staff.
- ❑ Follow directions of fire and/or police officials.
- ❑ Notify Facilities without delay.
- ❑ If utility lines are affected, notify appropriate utility providers.

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FLOODING

Flooding (Storm Drain Back-Up, Leak, Broken Pipe)

- ❑ Move materials out of the affected area. Store on a higher floor or place off the floor.
- ❑ **Notify Facilities** (emergency after-hours 250-727-8160 / daytime 250-920-3442) **and Operations** (daytime 250-920-3461).
- ❑ If an electrical room is involved, do not enter.
- ❑ If necessary, alternate locations will be established to insure that students are able to continue their schooling and any impending exams.

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SUICIDE

AT SCHOOL

- ❑ Check vitals. Call 911 and inform dispatcher that a suicide has taken place.
- ❑ Call parents/guardians and inform them that an emergency has taken place. Direct them to go to the school or hospital, as appropriate. Ensure that someone meets them when they arrive.
- ❑ Secure the room that the student is in, as it is a crime scene.
- ❑ Take any witnesses to a private area to wait for police. Have a staff member with them to provide support.
- ❑ Call the Superintendent's office.
- ❑ Wait for police and brief them when they arrive to take over the scene.
- ❑ Assemble school-based Critical Incident Team.
- ❑ Call District Critical Incident Team.
- ❑ Inform staff of the incident and have them contain students in classrooms.

OUT OF SCHOOL

- ❑ Inform the Superintendent.
- ❑ Meet with the school-based Critical Incident Response Team and plan response.
- ❑ Meet with staff to inform them of the death. If possible do this before school starts so that staff have a chance to process the information before going to their classrooms. Provide TOC coverage for staff who are unable to return to their classrooms right away.
- ❑ Contact staff who are absent to inform them of the death.
- ❑ Call District Critical Incident Response Team.

ALL SITUATIONS

- ❑ **Do not talk to the media.**
- ❑ Contact family. Express sympathy, both personally and on behalf of the school, keeping multicultural sensitivities in mind (see chart attached).
- ❑ If possible, sensitivity clarify with family what details may be shared with the school community and whether the family is referring to the death as a suicide or a sudden death.
- ❑ Call close friends of the student out of class to tell them about the death. Contact their parents/guardians immediately so that the students have support at home.
- ❑ Prepare a statement to be read to students giving basic facts, but no details, of the death. Unless the parents/guardians give permission to refer to the death as a suicide, call it a sudden death.

- ❑ Prepare a letter to go home to parents/guardians, informing them of the sudden death, outlining support provided by the school and ways that they can support their children.
- ❑ Develop a plan for immediate and follow-up support for students and staff. **It is likely that district and/or community support will be needed to deal with a suicide due to the magnitude of its impact.** Contacting these supports and engaging their assistance quickly will be beneficial. The District Critical Incident Team, Project Alive, and Living and Learning through Loss can provide support.
- ❑ Prepare a list of students who might be at risk of suicide and contact parents/guardians, if appropriate.
- ❑ Organize a drop-in centre for students.
- ❑ Monitor social networking sites (Facebook, etc.), if possible.
- ❑ Hold a staff meeting at the end of the day. Assess staff needs.
- ❑ Ensure documentation is complete.
- ❑ Inform staff and students of funeral arrangements.
- ❑ Consider holding a memory event as you would for any death in order to gather as a school community, honour the life of the student, and begin the transition to normal life. See RESOURCES section of this guide for information on memory events following a suicide.
- ❑ Following the funeral, have school return to normal routines. Continue to monitor student reaction (particularly students identified as at-risk for suicide) and connect vulnerable students with community resources.
- ❑ Monitor student reaction on anniversaries of the suicide and provide support, as necessary.
- ❑ Direct staff members to remove student's name from computer, attendance and mailing lists.
- ❑ Involve family and/or close peers of the deceased in the plan for clearing the student's locker, desk and personal effects.

NOTE: FOLLOWING A SUICIDE, OR A SUDDEN DEATH, STUDENTS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE TO SUICIDE ATTEMPTS, PARTICULARLY ON ANNIVERSARIES.

Refer to [Suicide, What You Need To Know: A Guide for School Personnel](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf)
(www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf) for further details.

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SUICIDE ATTEMPT

(The student has the means to carry out the suicide right there.)

- ❑ Administer first aid, if required.
- ❑ Call 911, inform the dispatcher that it is a suicide attempt, and ask for the Emergency Mental Health Services Team, if available. Have someone meet police/ambulance and escort them to the student. **The student will be taken to the hospital by ambulance for a mental health assessment.**
- ❑ Identify a key staff member who has positive connections with the student and have them remain with the student to provide support.
- ❑ Contact the parents/guardians (and/or social worker, if involved).
- ❑ Clear non-essential personnel from the area or move the student to a safe area.
- ❑ Inform the Associate Superintendent.
- ❑ Consult with the police when they arrive to take charge of the scene.
- ❑ Assemble school Critical Incident Team.
- ❑ Inform staff members and debrief at the end of the day.
- ❑ Plan for and provide support to classmates and school-population, as appropriate.
- ❑ Identify other students who may be at risk for suicide and monitor their behaviour. Monitor social networking sites (Facebook, etc.) if possible.
- ❑ Connect parents/guardians with appropriate community resources, if appropriate.
- ❑ Ensure that a written record of the attempt is kept in the student's file and that this information is given to the receiving school immediately should the student transfer.
- ❑ Develop a safety plan with parents/guardians, students, counsellor and key staff to address the student's needs when returning to school after hospitalization or treatment.
- ❑ Continue to monitor the student for changes in appearance, attitude, academic performance or behaviour, which might signal an increase of risk. Provide ongoing support.
- ❑ **Do not compromise your own personal safety if a weapon is involved.**
- ❑ **Do not leave the student alone until police or ambulance personnel take control.**
- ❑ **Do not allow bystanders to view the event.**
- ❑ **Do not bring other students to talk to the person attempting suicide.**

NOTE: FOLLOWING A SUICIDE OR A SUDDEN DEATH, STUDENTS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE TO SUICIDE ATTEMPT.

Refer to [Suicide, What You Need To Know: A Guide for School Personnel](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf)
(www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf) for further details.

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SUICIDE THREAT - STUDENT

(The student is talking about a future suicide.)

- ❑ Identify a key person who has positive connections with the student.
- ❑ Have that key person talk to the student to determine seriousness of the RISK. (Lethality, availability and short timeframe). **The more lethal and available the means, and the more definite the timeframe, the greater the risk.**
- ❑ School personnel should contact the Emergency Mental Health Team through their confidential pager number at 250-361-5958.
- ❑ Inform parents or guardian, if appropriate, and direct them to come to the school to meet with you and pick up the student.
- ❑ Connect student and/or family with community resources, (Project Alive), as appropriate.
- ❑ Ensure that the school counsellor, if not already involved, is informed.
- ❑ Review student's history to determine whether previous threats/attempts were made.
- ❑ Inform principal.
- ❑ Ensure a written record of this threat is kept in the student's / IEP file and that this information is given to the receiving school immediately if the student transfers. If threat is serious, develop a safety plan outlining supports in place.
- ❑ Continue to monitor the student for changes in appearance, attitude, academic performance or behaviour, which might signal an increase of risk and provide ongoing support.

Refer To [Suicide What You Need to Know: a Guide for School Personnel](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf)
(www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/suicide.pdf).

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SUICIDE THREAT – STAFF MEMBER

(A staff member is talking about a future suicide.)

- ❑ Identify a key person who has positive connections with the staff member.
- ❑ Have that key person talk to the staff member to determine seriousness of the RISK. (Lethality, availability and short timeframe.) **The more lethal and available the means, and the more definite the timeframe, the greater the risk.**
- ❑ If needed, call Homewood # is 1-800-663-1142
- ❑ Inform family – partner – adult support.
- ❑ Inform District Health & Safety Advisor in Human Resources – 250-475-4192
- ❑ Connect individual with community doctor/resources.
- ❑ Continue to monitor the staff member for changes in appearance, attitude, well-being or behaviour, which might signal an increase of risk.
- ❑ Provide on-going support.

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TSUNAMI THREAT

Unless identified as an at-risk school, retain your students until:

- Normal closing time and an "all-clear" has been announced by emergency personnel, or;
- A dismissal time has been announced by the Superintendent of Schools.
- Parents/guardians are prepared to pick up their children or have indicated that they are ready to receive their children at home. In cases where this is not possible, students shall be retained at the schools until instructions have been received from emergency personnel.
- Provide the following general safety instructions to students:
 - Stay away from all beaches or waterfront.
 - Keep tuned to the radio station for up-to-date information.
 - Do not use the telephone, except to report serious emergencies.
 - Ensure that you maintain high ground.

If the school is being evacuated, efforts should be made to ensure the following:

- Turn off power, gas and water, if time permits.
- Cooperate fully with the police and emergency personnel.
- Do not return to the school until you hear an "all-clear". A tsunami may continue for several hours.

Note: Schools in areas identified as at-risk in a tsunami should have a plan specific to their situation. This plan should identify an alternate location and procedures for evacuating the school.

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WEATHER / SNOW / EMERGENCIES / SCHOOL CLOSURE

Snow or Other Bad Weather (windstorms, ice storms, etc.)

- If bad weather conditions occur during the night, the Superintendent will make a determination by 6:30 AM and, if there is to be a school closure, it will be announced on local radio stations. Buses may not run, which may affect students with special needs. This information will also be released to radio stations.
- If school operation is affected, Principals will be called early in the morning by their Associate Superintendent. “Phone trees” in individual schools may be used to notify staff.
- If weather conditions worsen during the day, the District will decide whether to dismiss early. The Superintendent will authorize the closure and announcements will be made on local radio and television stations. Early dismissals are very infrequent.
- Each employee must determine if the weather conditions would adversely affect their safe travel to work. The decision to travel in such conditions lies exclusively with the individual employee. A choice to not report to work must be conveyed to the supervisor. However, if the District schools are open, the employee’s absence will be deemed to be a leave without pay. In this case, employees are required to use Code 11 (Personal Leave Unpaid) when reporting the absence via ADS (Automated Dispatch System).
- Some staff may be requested to attend the closest available school to assist.

Note: Websites for information on school closures:

<http://www.sd61.bc.ca>

School websites

Other Special Conditions on an Individual School Basis (School heating plant fails to function; loss of power/light to individual school; local flooding or damage to all or part of a school; natural gas build-up, etc.)

- School custodian notifies Principal and security.
- Principal notifies Associate Superintendent or Superintendent.
- School custodian notifies Facilities.
- Particular situation is examined by Supervisor/Director/Principal. Utility companies, Fire Department to be consulted as needed.
- Action to be determined by Administrator in consultation with Superintendent.

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MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Religion Culture	Expressions Of Sympathy	Visitation and Burial	General information
BAHA'Í	Similar to the Christian customs.	Baha'í dead must be buried within an hour's travel distance from the place of death. Baha'ís do not embalm or cremate their dead. The dead body is washed and wrapped in a shroud. The deceased, if he or she is fifteen years of age, should also be buried wearing a Bahá'í burial ring. The only ceremonial requirement of a funeral is the recitation of the Prayer for the Dead.	Death is regarded as a 'messenger of joy' for the deceased. Baha'ís believe the soul lives on after the body's death and embarks on a spiritual journey.
CHINESE	Flowers, cards, telephone, visit the family and present a white envelope with money in it.	Most Chinese families prefer open caskets, thus it is polite to stop for a few seconds to view the body before proceeding out. A burial is more traditional than cremation. People usually stay at the funeral home until the family leaves for the interment. A wake follows. There is usually a one-month mourning period following the death for family members only.	Female family members wear a white flower on their head and male members wear a black arm band during the funeral ceremony. Both the white flower and black arm band will be placed on top of the casket just before burial.
CHRISTIAN	Flowers, cards, and/or donations to designated charities are appropriate.	Funeral and memorial ceremonies allow family and friends to gather and pay tribute to a unique life that has been lived. The funeral is a service for the living that allows friends and relatives to offer comfort and support to one another. The funeral service may take many forms; held at the funeral home or the family church, conducted by clergy or not. The service should meet the needs of the surviving family.	Family members are the last to enter and first to leave the service. Other mourners follow the lead of the family or their designate. There are no general rules on dress or format. There may or may not be visiting hours.
FIRST NATIONS	Sending flowers, food, sympathy card or money is appropriate. A representative from the school may deliver them.	Coast Salish: (Comox to Victoria, including Saanich & Gulf Islands) A prayer service is held the night before the service. Classmates and school personnel are welcome to attend. The funeral, which is a full day process, may be held in the church or Longhouse. Nuu Chah Nulth: (West coast of Vancouver Island from Kyuquot to Port Renfrew) The deceased will usually be taken back to their home reserve to be buried. A gathering or prayer service may be held here prior to that with school personnel and students welcome. Kwa Kwa ka'wakw: (Northeast coast of Vancouver Island Comox to Port Hardy) The same as above, although the prayer services may be limited. Check with the family before attending. The deceased may often be taken back to their reserve to be buried.	Coast Salish, Nuuchah Nulth: At the prayers, there may be drumming, singing and a long eulogy. There is usually an open casket and people go by to pay their respects. Pictures of the deceased may be taken down and not shown for a year. Family members or close relatives may cut their hair. The family will expect time to be given to the children to cry and grieve for the deceased. A memorial service may be held as much as a year or up to four years after the burial. Kwa Kwa ka'wakw: As above, including that people may express their emotions as the body is placed in the ground and the memorial may take place as long as four years after the burial.

HINDU	Flowers or a letter are appropriate.	<p>There is visitation if the deceased is an adult. If the deceased is a child, there is usually no visitation. However, classmates might be permitted with the consent of the parents.</p> <p>Those in attendance sit during the chanting of hymns and then go to express their condolences.</p> <p>Traditionally, the deceased is cremated the same day, but in Canada there is usually a 48-hour delay. It is important to check with the funeral home.</p> <p>Very young children (under 12 years of age) are not cremated. They are buried.</p>	<p>When entering the temple, shoes are to be removed and the feet are sprinkled with the water that is provided.</p> <p>Preferably, the person enters the temple in bare feet. However, socks are acceptable. Shoulders and knees are to be covered.</p> <p>Women usually stand to the left of the men. A handshake between a man and a woman is not traditional.</p>
ISLAM	Salutations and offering remembrances for the dead are acceptable. All other ways, such as placing wreaths, flowers, paying homage etc. are incorrect.	<p>The deceased is buried as soon as possible, with the mourning period lasting four months and ten days. As burial is done quickly, there is no time for visitation prior to the funeral.</p> <p>Funeral services are carried out at the cemetery, outdoor facility or building designated for such an event. Funeral services are never performed in a Mosque.</p>	<p>One should be most humble, express grief, speak less about worldly affairs, should not joke or laugh, and, mention the good acts and deeds of the deceased.</p> <p>Choice of clothing colour is optional.</p>
JAPANESE	Flowers sent to the family should only be white or yellow. Black should be worn. There should be no ornamental jewellery except pearls.	<p>There are one, two, or three days of mourning, depending on the size or social status of the family. The funeral usually takes place in the home; however, more so now in community centers. There is often an open casket and the body is not left alone. Traditionally, the body is cremated. The ashes are kept in the home. After 49 days, they are put in the grave so the spirit will be at rest.</p>	<p>An offering or donation to the family is acceptable. The family usually gives gifts back to those who gave offerings, unless they have donated to a charity instead of giving a gift.</p>
JUDAISM	A letter is appropriate. Flowers are NOT to be sent.	<p>Burial is the same day or the next day. There is no visitation before the burial. The family is visited during the Shiva, which is observed for seven days. The day of the burial is considered to be the first day of Shiva and lasts until the first five minutes of the last day with a full five days in between. If one of the interim five days falls on a Sabbath, visitation does not begin until sunset. During the visitation, it is preferable to wait for a family member to speak first, after the initial expression of sympathy.</p>	<p>It is not traditional for a man and a woman to shake hands, if they are of the Orthodox faith.</p>
SIKH	Flowers or a letter are appropriate.	<p>People usually go to the bereaved family's home to express their condolences.</p> <p>The deceased is cremated, either the same day or as soon as possible.</p> <p>On the day of cremation, the family is given the Holy Book to take home to read for ten days duration. During the ten days, and after the tenth day, people may go to the bereaved family's home to pay their respects.</p>	<p>There are no colour restrictions for clothing, but simplicity is stressed. During PRAYERS and the Temple, men and women must have their heads covered. Men from the Sikh faith wear turbans. Shoes are to be removed before entering the temple. Men and women stand on different sides in the temple. A handshake between a man and a woman is not traditional.</p>

SCRIPT FOR OFFICE STAFF

After a death or critical incident, it is important to provide a script for office staff who will be answering school phones and greeting people who come in to the office. As all inquiries from parents, community members and the MEDIA, will come through them, office staff need to know what to say as well as which calls to put through to their administrators. This can be very stressful for the office staff as they may be speaking to parents who are worried about their children and because they will be going over and over information about this loss. It is important to provide office staff with as much support as possible.

It is not possible to provide a ready made script as each incident is unique and the information appropriate for sharing with callers will change throughout the process.

Here are some considerations to guide the development of a script:

- **Staff should only share information approved by the school administrator.** Information gathered from other staff members, parents or community members is not to be shared unless directed by the administrator. Often initial information from the public proves to be inaccurate and passing this on can be damaging or hurtful.
- Try to balance the need to be sensitive to the family of the deceased and the need of school parents to be reassured that their children are okay.
- When deciding what information to include in the script, consult with the superintendent/associate superintendent.
- Share only information that has been confirmed by the police or the family of the deceased.
- In the event of a confirmed death, acknowledge that you have lost a member of the school community but do not give the name of the student/staff member.
- Emphasize that the focus at the school is supporting the students.
- Confirm that information will be coming home to parents by the end of the day.
- If office staff receive information from callers, have them pass it on to the administrators ASAP.
- Update the script as new confirmed information becomes available.

MEDIA INQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE SUPERINTENDENT. Do not share information with the media unless approved by the superintendent/associate superintendent.

ANNOUNCEMENT TO STUDENTS TEMPLATE

Classroom teacher, school counsellor or CIRT member reads after the death of a member of the school community.

We have sad news that I need to share with you.

When something like this happens, it can affect people in many different ways. Some of you may not feel very different at all. Some of you may feel sad, angry, shocked, or even scared. These are all usual reactions to hearing news like this and they are usually temporary. It is important to treat each other with respect and compassion today as each of you deals with this news in your own way.

If you are feeling like you need a place to talk about this, share feelings, draw or make cards, or just sit quietly by yourself, you can go to _____. It will be open all day today, just let your teacher know that's where you are going. Remember if you choose to go there that you are expected to be respectful and responsible and that we want you to come back and be part of the class as soon as you are able.

I know that it was hard for me to hear this news and I am wondering how about it is for you.

Possible guiding questions:

- › Had you heard this news? What were your thoughts?
- › What experiences have you had with death or loss?
- › What do you think this might be like for the family?
- › What will help us feel better right now? What can I do for you today?
- › What are some ways we help each other get through times like this?

Today is a day that we all need to be our best selves.

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LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS TEMPLATE

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I have some sad news to share with you today. It is with much regret that I inform you of the death of a member of our school community. _____, *(name of the person who has died if you have family permission to share it)* _____ *(relationship to the school: teacher, student, parent)* died on _____. *(If you have permission from the family you can include a brief statement here of cause of death: in a car accident, after a long illness.)* I am sure that you join me in expressing deepest sympathy to the family at this time.

Staff at our school have spoken to all of the students about this loss. Students will have varied reactions to the death as a wide range of reactions is common in the grieving process and can vary from withdrawal, to crying and anger. Young children may want to stay close to you over this next while as reassurance that you will still be there. Older children may have a strong need to be with their peers. I encourage you to talk openly with your child about this death and his/her reactions and feelings. On the back of this letter I have included some suggestions for how you might support your child with this news.

Special counselling services will be available to students at school should there be a need. If you think your child needs additional counselling support, please do not hesitate to contact the school office at _____.

Sincerely,

_____, Principal

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Helping Elementary School Youth Deal with Grief and Loss

Here are some things that parents/guardians can do to support children dealing with death.

CHECK FACTS:

- › Give simple, accurate information about what happened. Tell only what you know to be confirmed.
- › Do not allow children to watch media coverage of the death.
- › Answer questions honestly, providing only as much detail as requested.
- › Check out what has been heard about the death and correct any misinformation or rumours. “Tell me what you have heard . . .” is a good conversation opener. Be aware of the kind of information exchange happening through msn, chat lines, or social networking sites (Facebook, etc.).

CHECK FEELINGS:

- › Ask your child how he/she is feeling.
- › Tell him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear, relief are all common.
- › Children will often feel responsible in some way for a death. They may believe that it is punishment for something they have done wrong. It is important to reassure them that this is not the case.
- › Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, and lack of interest in normal play activities. Your child may also cry more easily, be clingy and not want to be alone, wet the bed, or revert to immature behaviours. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.

EMPOWER:

- › Encourage your child to attend school.
- › Invite your child to talk about the person who has died.
- › Help your child identify what he/she has done in tough or sad situations before and how it has helped.
- › Remind him/her that you know he/she is strong and has coped with difficult situations in the past.
- › Facilitate opportunities for him/her to engage in coping activities such as: talking to friends or relatives, getting together with peers, writing in a journal, drawing a picture, going to a memorial service, making a memory book or collage, planting a flower or tree. Follow his/her lead.

MONITOR:

- › For older children, monitor chat lines/msn/Facebook and other social networking sites use.
- › Watch for signs that your child may need professional help to cope with this loss:
 - Normal living patterns do not resume over time
 - A continuation of nightmares or need to talk about the death.
 - A continuation of feelings of insecurity and fear
- › Seek support from your Family Doctor, Living and Learning Through Loss (250 413-3114), Hospice (250 370-8715), or Child and Youth Mental Health, school or community counsellors.

REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN ARE REMARKABLY RESILIENT.
WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT THEY DO RECOVER FROM THE VERY SAD AND TRAGIC
EVENTS THAT LIFE CAN THROW THEIR WAY.

Helping Middle School Youth Deal with Grief and Loss

Here are some things that parents/guardians can do to support youth dealing with death.

CHECK FACTS:

- › Give accurate information about what happened. Tell only what you know to be confirmed.
- › Limit viewing of media coverage of the death as repeated viewing may be traumatizing.
- › Answer questions honestly, providing only as much detail as requested.
- › Check out what has been heard about the death and correct any misinformation or rumours. “Tell me what you have heard . . .” is a good conversation opener. Be aware of the kind of information exchange happening through msn, chat lines, or social networking sites (Facebook, etc.).

CHECK FEELINGS:

- › Ask your youth how he/she is feeling.
- › Tell him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear, relief are all common.
- › Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lack of interest in normal play activities, desire to be alone. Your youth may also exhibit a decline in school performance and an increase in acting out behaviours, including exaggerated emotional responses. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.

EMPOWER:

- › Encourage your youth to attend school.
- › Invite your youth to talk about the person who has died.
- › Help your youth identify what he/she has done in past tough or sad situations and how it has helped.
- › Remind him/her that you know he/she is strong and has coped with difficult situations in the past.
- › Facilitate opportunities for him/her to engage in healing activities such as: talking to friends or relatives, getting together with peers, writing in a journal or writing a poem, drawing or painting, participating in sports activities, going to a memorial service, making a memory book or collage, planting a flower or tree. Follow his/her lead.

MONITOR:

- › Communication exchanges through msn, chat lines or social networking sites (Facebook, etc.).
- › Participation in at-risk behaviours such as isolation, drug and alcohol use, violence, and delinquency.
- › Watch for signs that your youth may need professional help to cope with this loss:
 - Normal living patterns do not resume over time
 - A continuation of nightmares or need to talk about the death.
 - A continuation of feelings of insecurity and fear
- › Seek support from your Family Doctor, Living and Learning Through Loss (250 413-3114), Hospice (250 370-8715, Child and Youth Mental Health, or school or community counsellors.

REMEMBER THAT YOUTH ARE REMARKABLY RESILIENT.
WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT THEY DO RECOVER FROM THE VERY SAD AND TRAGIC EVENTS THAT
LIFE CAN THROW THEIR WAY.

Helping Secondary Youth Deal with Grief and Loss

Here are some things that parents/guardians can do to support youth dealing with death.

CHECK FACTS:

- › Give accurate information about what happened. Tell only what you know to be confirmed.
- › Answer questions honestly, providing only as much detail as requested.
- › Be aware that repeated viewing of the media coverage of the death can be traumatizing.
- › Check out what has been heard about the death and correct any misinformation or rumours. "Tell me what you have heard . . ." is a good conversation opener. Be aware of the kind of information exchange happening through msn, chat lines, or social networking sites (Facebook, etc.).

CHECK FEELINGS:

- › Ask your youth how he/she is feeling.
- › Tell him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear, relief are all common.
- › Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lack of interest in normal activities, desire to be alone. Self-criticism, displaced anger, decline in school performance, and participation in at-risk behaviours may also occur. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.

EMPOWER:

- › Encourage your youth to attend school.
- › Invite your youth to talk about the person that he/she has lost.
- › Help your youth identify what he/she has done in tough or sad situations before and how it has helped.
- › Remind him/her that you know he/she is strong and has coped with difficult situations in the past.
- › Facilitate opportunities for him/her to engage in healing activities such as: talking to friends or relatives, getting together with peers, writing in a journal, drawing or painting, listening to music, participating in sports, going to a memorial service, making a memory book or collage, planting a flower or tree. Follow his/her lead.

MONITOR:

- › Monitor chat line/msn/Facebook, etc. use.
- › Monitor risk-taking behaviour such as use of alcohol and drugs, violence, delinquency, and self-harm.
- › Watch for signs that your child may need professional help to cope with this loss:
 - Normal living patterns do not resume over time
 - A continuation of nightmares or need to talk about the death.
 - A continuation of feelings of anxiety, insecurity and/or fear
- › Seek support from your Family Doctor, Living and Learning Through Loss (250 413-3114), Victoria Hospice (250 370-8715), Child and Youth Mental Health, or school or community counsellors.

REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN ARE REMARKABLY RESILIENT.
WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT THEY DO RECOVER FROM THE VERY SAD AND TRAGIC EVENTS THAT
LIFE CAN THROW THEIR WAY.

SECONDARY STUDENT SELF-CARE

Taking Care of Yourself

It is important for each of you to take care of yourself and each other during this very difficult time.

Be Aware That:

- It is common to have feelings such as: shock, sadness, anger, guilt, fear.
- You might experience nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, fatigue.
- You may want to talk about this a lot, you may not.
- You may remember other losses or difficult times in your life and some of the feelings may return.
- Grief is different for everyone. It is okay for it to take a long time or a short time.
- It is okay for friends and family to see that you are struggling to deal with this loss.
- Drugs and alcohol can intensify feelings and make it more difficult for you to cope.

Know What Helps:

- Look after yourself. Drink lots of water, eat healthy food, and get as much sleep as you need.
- Connect with the people who are the “rocks” in your life (family members, friends).
- It’s also okay to spend time alone, if that is what helps.
- Make time for activities that help when you are troubled or stressed: journaling, reading, hanging out with friends, playing sports, listening to music.
- Trust yourself. We generally know what we need to do to take care of ourselves; we just don’t always do it.

Seek Help If Needed:

- You can get more help from:
 - School Counsellors
 - Living and Learning Through Loss: 250 413-3114
 - Need Crisis Line 250 386 6323
 - Community Counsellors

THIS IS A TIME TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AND EACH OTHER.

PARENT SELF-CARE

Taking Care of Yourself

When your child has experienced the loss of someone in his/her life, that loss affects you as well. Feelings of grief, sympathy for the family of the deceased, fears about whether this could happen to your family, concerns about the well-being of your child, and memories of other losses you have experienced are common.

It is important that you acknowledge and process your feelings/reactions to this death so that you can support your child and model healthy ways to deal with grief and loss.

Be Aware That:

- Along with your child, you may be experiencing a normal and wide range of emotions including: shock, sadness, anger, guilt, fear.
- Along with your child, these strong feelings may lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, fatigue, the need to be alone or conversely to be with others.
- Some of you may have a need to talk about this loss a lot; others may not want to talk about it at all.
- This loss may trigger strong memories of other losses or difficult times in your life and some of the associated feelings may return.
- It may trigger a desire to keep your children close to you and to limit their independence.
- The grieving process can take much longer than we anticipate and strong feelings and reactions can catch you off guard during this journey.
- While your child needs to know that you are strong and that they can count on you, he/she also needs to know that grieving is hard for everyone. It is okay for him/her to see that you are struggling to deal with this loss.

Know What Helps:

- Look after your physical health by drinking lots of water, eating healthily, and getting as much sleep as you need.
- Connect with the people who are the “rocks” in your life (family members, friends).
- If you process feelings through talking, identify someone whom you trust with your confidences. It might be a close friend, someone who has been through a similar experience, or a religious leader.
- Give yourself permission to spend time alone, if that is what helps.
- Think about what activities you usually turn to when you are troubled or stressed: journaling, reading, painting, exercising or gardening. Make time for them.
- Trust yourself. We generally know what we need to do to take care of ourselves; we just don't always do.

Seek Help If Needed:

- If you feel that you are struggling with the impact from this loss, don't hesitate to get help:
 - Living and Learning Through Loss: 250 413-3114
 - Family Doctor
 - Community Counsellor

Remember that taking care of yourself is an important part of taking care of your child.

STAFF SELF-CARE

Taking Care of Yourself

When schools are rocked by a tragic event, staff tend to focus all of their energies on caring for their students. It is important, however, for each of you to take care of yourself during this very difficult time.

Be Aware That:

- Along with your students, you may be experiencing a normal and wide range of emotions including: shock, sadness, anger, guilt, fear.
- Along with your students, these strong feelings may lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, fatigue, the need to be alone or conversely to be with others.
- Some of you may have a need to talk about this loss a lot; others may not want to talk about it at all.
- This loss may trigger strong memories of other losses or difficult times in your life and some of the associated feelings may return.
- If you are a parent, it may trigger a desire to keep your children close to you and to limit their independence.
- The grieving process can take much longer than we anticipate and strong feelings and reactions can catch you off guard during this journey.
- While your students need to know that you are strong and that they can count on you, they also need to know that grieving is hard for everyone. It is okay for them to see that you are struggling to deal with this loss.

Know What Helps:

- Look after your physical health by drinking lots of water, eating healthily, and getting as much sleep as you need.
- Connect with the people who are the “rocks” in your life (family members, friends).
- If you process feelings through talking, identify someone whom you trust with your confidences. It might be a close friend, someone who has been through a similar experience, or a religious leader.
- Give yourself permission to spend time alone, if that is what helps.
- Think about what activities you usually turn to when you are troubled or stressed: journaling, reading, painting, exercising or gardening. Make time for them.
- Trust yourself. We generally know what we need to do to take care of ourselves; we just don’t always do it.

Seek Help If Needed:

- If you feel that you are struggling with the impact from this loss, don’t hesitate to get help:
 - Interlock: 1 800 663 9099
 - Living and Learning Through Loss: 250 413-3114
 - Family Doctor
 - Community Counsellor

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HELPING YOUTH DEAL WITH SUICIDE

Dealing with suicide can be complex for youth and the parents supporting him/her. Here are some things that can help:

CHECK FACTS:

- ♦ Give accurate information about what happened. Tell only what you know to be confirmed. If it has been confirmed as a suicide, speak of it as such. Avoid guessing about the cause of the suicide. Particularly avoid linking the cause to teenage fads or fringe groups (such as goth culture).
- ♦ Answer questions honestly, providing only as much detail as requested.
- ♦ Check out what has been heard about the death and correct any misinformation or rumours. “Tell me what you have heard . . .” is a good conversation opener. Because peers may be looking for someone to blame for the suicide to help them make sense of what happened, it is critical to stick to the facts.

CHECK FEELINGS:

- › Ask your youth how he/she is feeling and accept what they have to say.
- › Remind him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear are all normal.
- › Guilt can be a particularly powerful feeling in relation to the suicide as youth often assume that there was something that they could have done to prevent it. This is reinforced by the fact that the friend may have talked about wanting to take his/her own life prior to the death. Let your youth talk about these feelings freely and help him/her to understand that he/she is not at fault. No one person can cause or prevent a suicide. It is usually a decision made after a long, complex journey.
- › Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lack of interest in normal activities, desire to be alone. Self-criticism, displaced anger, decline in school performance, and participation in at-risk or acting out behaviours such as exaggerated emotional responses may also occur. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.

EMPOWER:

- › Invite your youth to talk about the friend that he/she has lost.
- › Talk about suicide openly. Remember that it is complicated and that we rarely know all of the factors involved. It may be viewed as a permanent solution to a temporary problem. It is a “thinking” error”.
- › Talk about things that your youth already does when facing a tough situation.
- › Remind your youth that you know he/she is strong and has coped with difficult situations in the past and that there are people and resources to support him/her through this.
- › Facilitate opportunities for him/her to engage in healing activities: talking to friends or relatives, getting together with peers, writing in a journal, writing a poem, listening to music, drawing or painting, playing sports, going to a memorial service, making a memory book or collage, planting a flower or tree. Follow his/her lead.

MONITOR:

- › Participation in risk-taking behaviour such as use of alcohol and drugs, violence, delinquency, driving recklessly, and self-harm.
- › Watch for signs that your child may need professional help to cope with this loss:
 - Normal living patterns do not resume over time
 - A continuation of nightmares or need to talk about the death
 - Persistent thoughts or talk of suicide.
 - A continuation of feelings of insecurity and fear
- › Seek support from your Family Doctor, Living and Learning through Loss, Child and Youth Mental Health, Project Alive, or school or community counsellors.

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MEMORIALS AFTER A SUICIDE

Students may want to do something in honour of the student who has committed suicide. Avoid dedications such as tree plantings, dedicated pages in year books, pictures in the hallways, benches etc. Guide students towards “living memorials” such as volunteering for causes supported by the student who committed suicide, raising money for suicide prevention groups, serving as peer helpers in their school or a neighbouring elementary school, donating funds to “helping” agencies or to assist the family of the deceased if appropriate.

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TALKING WITH STUDENTS AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

The purpose of this is to help students begin to process their feelings in a healthy way after a traumatic event such as a suicide, murder, car accident involving multiple students or witnessed by students.

Check Facts:

- a. Give out the facts as given by police/family.
- b. Check out the rumours. This is particularly important in the initial stages when there is much misinformation about what happened. It is important to give the police time to sort out exactly what happened. Early on facts are usually very limited.
- c. Beware of chatline/Facebook communications as they are not always based on fact.

Check Feelings:

- d. Normalize the reactions that students may be experiencing, for example: shock, anger, disbelief, sadness, fear, indifference.
- e. Allow students the opportunity to share reactions upon hearing the news.
- f. Allow students the opportunity to share stories about their connection to the student who has died or about other losses.

Educate:

- g. Talk about common reactions to an event such as this, for example: loss of appetite, irritability, difficulty focusing in school, range of emotions, desire to take risks, desire to self-medicate.
- h. Allow students the opportunity to share concerns for the future, for example: safety, things will never be normal again, this could happen to me, did he/she do something to deserve it. Talk about strategies they can use to keep safe and to look out for each other.
- i. Educate about the process of grief, that it takes time, that it may come and go, but that it does change and become easier to deal with.

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TIPS FOR PARENTS PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY

(Possible Insert for School Newsletters)

Before Something Happens:

- › Ensure that your child's school has up to date contact and medical information on file.
- › Ensure that the school has contact numbers for two other adults who are authorized to pick your child up if you cannot get to the school. Let your child know whose names are on that list.
- › If your child has a medical condition requiring daily medication, ensure the school has enough medication and a signed authorization form from the doctor to cover seventy-two hours.
- › If your child's school has "comfort packs" (small bags with items that would comfort your child in an emergency situation-a small stuffy or toy, picture of the family, letter from a parent) make sure it has been sent to the school.
- › Talk to your child about what to do in an emergency at home (include how to call 911 and what information to give).
- › For an older child, set up a contact number (this number should be for someone outside of the province) that you and your child can call to re-connect if you are separated by a disaster.

When Something Happens:

- › Listen to local media for information about where to pick your child up if the event happens during school hours.
- › Avoid jamming phone lines by trying to call the school.
- › Avoid congesting roads adjacent to the school. Park a block away so that emergency vehicles can access the school.
- › When you reach your child in person or by cell phone, model calmness and optimism.

After Something Has Happened:

- › Limit television coverage of the event. The younger the child the less should be seen.
- › Let your child know events like this happen rarely. As quickly as possible resume normal routines (meals & bedtimes).
- › Provide comfort through hugs, food, and spending time engaged in chores, play, or physical activities as a family.
- › Model strong coping behaviours. Children will take their lead from you.
- › Let your child talk about the event. Answer questions factually, but giving only as much information as requested.
- › Talk to your child about how he/she is doing. It is not unusual for children to experience anxiety, confusion, acting out behaviours, irritability, nightmares or stomach aches. Children may also experience a range of feelings including anger, sadness, guilt, or fear if there has been a death connected with this event.
- › Talk about what has helped your child in other tough situations-writing, drawing, being with friends, physical activity.
- › Help your child build resiliency by participating in relief activities, reading stories about courage, and by talking about the positive things that are happening in our world.