

# **DEALING WITH TRAGEDY AND TRAUMA IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

## **An Overview**

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## **RANGE OF EXPOSURES**

**SUICIDE BEHAVIOR– FAMILY, PEER; WITNESSED**

**FATAL OR SEVERELY INJURIOUS TRANSPORTATION OR OTHER ACCIDENT**

**VIOLENCE – DIRECT / WITNESSED**

- HOME, SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY

**DISASTER – NATURAL / MAN-MADE**

- HOME, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, REGION

**HOSTAGE / KIDNAPPING**

**TERRORISM**

**LOSS EXPOSURE**

- WITHIN FAMILY
- PEER
- SCHOOL PERSONNEL

## **SERIOUS IMPACT - INDIVIDUAL CHILD**

### **PHYSICAL INJURY**

- ◆ HOSPITALIZATION, IMPAIRMENT / DISABILITY ONGOING MEDICAL / SURGICAL PROCEDURES, REHABILITATION
- ◆ RE-INTERGRATION WITH PEERS

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- ◆ DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRAUMA AND GRIEF
- ◆ IMPORTANCE OF DEGREE OF EXPOSURE
  - DIRECT
  - WITNESS
  - WORRY ABOUT SIGNIFICANT OTHER
  - GUILT OVER OMISSION OR COMMISSION
- ◆ TRIPARTITE ORIGINS OF DISTRESS
  - TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES
  - TRAUMATIC REMINDERS
  - SECONDARY ADVERSITIES OR STRESSES

### **POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS, GRIEF, DEPRESSIVE, AND ANXIETY REACTIONS**

- ◆ POSTTRAUMATIC REACTIONS INCLUDE PERSISTENT NEUROBIOLOGICAL ALTERATIONS
- ◆ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- ◆ RECKLESS BEHAVIOR

## **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

- **DISTURBANCES IN CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION –**
  - **ASSOCIATED WITH SLEEP DISTURBANCES**
  
- **TRAUMATIC REMINDERS**
  - **SCHOOL SITE / PROCEDURES**
  - **CALENDAR YEAR**
  - **ACADEMIC MATERIAL**
  
- **THEMATIC PREOCCUPATIONS ARE NOW TRAUMA-RELATED**
  
- **IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL CONSEQUENCE**
  - **EXAMPLE; PRE-SCHOOL, EARLY ELEMENTARY,  
PREADOLESCENCE, ADOLESCENCE, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**
  
- **IMPORTANCE OF A GRADUATED CURRICULUM WITHIN RECOVERY  
PLAN**

## **ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR**

- **DISTURBANCES IN IMPULSE CONTROL AND AGGRESSIVITY**
  - **OBSESSIVE RETELLING**
  - **DICHOTOMOUS BEHAVIOR**
    - **EXCESSIVELY WITHDRAWN AND OVERLY COOPERATIVE VS IRRITABLE / AGGRESSIVE**
  - **ABRUPT CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR**
    - **SECONDARY TO UNIDENTIFIED / UNADDRESSED TRAUMATIC OR GRIEF REMINDERS**
- ❖ **BE CAREFUL OF PREMATURE LABELING OF BEHAVIOR AS DEVIANT**

## **CHANGE IN EXPECTATIONS AND SCHEMATIZATION OF DANGER**

- ◆ **MORE AUTONOMOUS OR DEPENDENT / REGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR**
  - **PREMATURE EFFORTS AT ENTERING ADULTHOOD**
  - **MORE RELIANCE ON PEERS FOR APPRAISAL / PROTECTION**
- ◆ **LACK OF TRUST IN FAMILY, SCHOOL OR INSTITUTIONS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION OR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**
- ◆ **PREOCCUPATION WITH INTERVENTION THOUGHTS**
  - **CONSTRUCTIVE**
  - **REVENGE**

## **IMPACT ON FAMILY**

- ◆ **IMPACT OF TRAUMA, LOSS AND SECONDARY ADVERSITIES**
- ◆ **PARENTAL PTSD, COMPLICATED BEREAVEMENT AND DEPRESSION**
- ◆ **PARENTING**
  - **CHANGE IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS OF PROTECTION**
- ◆ **PARENTAL INTERACTIONS WITH SCHOOL**
- ◆ **FAMILY MEMBERS AS REMINDERS TO EACH OTHER**

## **IMPACT ON SCHOOL**

- ◆ **INDIVIDUAL STAFF AND FACULTY**
- ◆ **PARENT BODY**
- ◆ **CLASS MILIEU**
  - **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**
  - **DISRUPT EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**
- ◆ **ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONING**
- ◆ **PEER RELATIONSHIPS**
- ◆ **SCHOOL MILIEU**
  - **SCHOOL PHYSICAL PLANT**
  - **TEACHING MATERIALS**
  - **MORALE**
  - **STANDARDIZED TESTING / EVALUATION OF SCHOOL**
- ◆ **COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS**
  - **WITHIN THE REGION**
  - **BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**
  - **NEED FOR SHARED RESOURCES**

## **SCHOOL CRISIS / TRAUMA / DISASTER RESPONSE PLANNING**

### **BEFORE – PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION**

- **MINIMIZE RISK, DAMAGE / INJURY AND EXPOSURE**
- **PRE – CRISIS AND DISASTER PLANS**
  - ACCESSIBLE
  - READABLE
  - PERIODICALLY REVIEWED AND UPDATED
  - EXPERT CONSULTATION
  - PSYCHOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS
  - STATE REQUIREMENTS
  - COMMUNITY RESOURCES – REVIEWED AND UPDATED
- **SCHOOL SITE CRISIS TEAM**
  - MULTI-SITE CRISIS RESPONSE UNIT
  - PRE – CRISIS / DISASTER TRAINING
  - INCLUDE TRUSTEES
- **PREPARATION OF STUDENTS, PARENTS AND STAFF**
  - EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
  - EMERGENCY SUPPLIES
  - METHODS OF PHYSICAL SELF-PROTECTION
  - PSYCHOEDUCATION ABOUT COMMON REACTIONS

## **DURING / IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH**

- **EVACUATION**
- **EMERGENCY MEDICAL RELIEF**
- **MINIMIZE SECONDARY EXPOSURE**
- **DECISION CENTER**
- **INFORMATION CENTER AND PROCEDURES**
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID**
- **PROCEDURE FOR REUNITING**
  - ❖ **PARENTS AND STUDENTS**
  - ❖ **SIBLINGS**
- **MECHANISM FOR DIRECTING MEDIA RESPONSE**
- **ADDRESS STAFF CONCERNS FOR OWN FAMILY**

## **ACUTE PHASE OF RECOVERY**

- ◆ **INCREASED SECRETARIAL / ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**
  - **DUTIES OF SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF INCREASE**
- ◆ **INCREASED COUNSELLING AND NURSING SUPPORT**
- ◆ **INCREASED DEMANDS ON TEACHERS**
  - **CONFLICT OVER PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY AND EDUCATIONAL GOALS / PROFESSIONALISM**
  - **INCREASED AVAILABILITY FOR PARENT, TEACHER, COUNSELLOR CONSULTATIONS**
- ◆ **PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE FOR TEACHERS / STAFF**
  - **PROCEDURES FOR CONFIDENTIALITY**
  - **RESOURCES – SUBSTITUTION IN CLASSROOM,**
  - **RELIEF FROM OUTSIDE CLASSROOM DUTIES**
  - **PAID TIME FOR TRAINING AND DEBRIEFING**
- ◆ **SPECIAL SUPPORT TO ADMINISTRATORS –**
  - **PSYCHOEDUCATION**
  - **IF DIRECTLY AFFECTED, CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE SCHOOL**
- ◆ **PSYCHOEDUCATION**
  - **STUDENTS / PARENTS / SCHOOL PERSONNEL / TRUSTEES**

## **IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMATIC APPROACH: MEETING NEW STANDARDS OF CARE**

- ◆ **SCREENING, TRIAGE, IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH RISK STUDENTS, SCHOOL PERSONNEL, OR FAMILIES**
- ◆ **MECHANISMS OF OUTREACH TO THOSE AFFECTED**
- ◆ **RESOURCES / FACILITIES FOR SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES - INCLUDING USE OF SCHOOL HOURS**
- ◆ **TAILORING SERVICES TO SUB-POPULATIONS OF STUDENTS**
- ◆ **INCREASED COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS AMONG ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS**
- ◆ **SPECIAL MEETING WITH PARENTS**
- ◆ **USE OF OUTSIDE CONSULTANT**
- ◆ **SPECIAL ASSEMBLIES**
- ◆ **SPECIAL PLACE OF CLASSROOM FOR STRUCTURED INTERVENTION**
- ◆ **IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING SCHOOL MILIEU TO TOLERATE DIFFERENT COURSES OF RECOVERY**
- ◆ **COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINED RECOVERY PLAN**
- ◆ **FEMA GRANT PROCEDURES – NEED FOR GRANT WRITER – FOR FIRST 90 DAYS AND 9 MONTH EXTENSION**
- ◆ **HAVING VICTIM-WITNESS PERSONNEL ON CAMPUS**

## **LONG-TERM RECOVERY / REHABILITATION**

- ◆ **ONGOING MONITORING OF COURSE OF RECOVERY**
- ◆ **SUPPORT LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR THOSE MOST AFFECTED**
  - **FIVE FOCI:**
    1. **TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE**
    2. **TRAUMA AND LOSS REMINDERS**
    3. **GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT**
    4. **SECONDARY ADVERSITIES**
    5. **DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT**
- ◆ **PLAN FOR PULSED SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS**
  - **ANNIVERSARIES, COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES**
  - **RECONSTRUCTION, INTERCURRENT TRAUMA – AS REMINDER, MAJOR SCHOOL OCCASIONS**
- ◆ **JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS –TRIAL**
  - **INCLUSION IN CURRICULUM**
  - **RECRUDESCENCE OF TRAUMATIC REACTIONS**
- ◆ **CONFIDENTIAL SYSTEM TO MAINTAIN STUDENT RECORD OF HISTORY OF EXPOSURE AND LOSSES**
  - **PREVENT MISLABELLING OF REACTIONS TO REMINDERS**
  - **PERMIT TIMELY INTERVENTION FOR RENEWED SYMPTOMS OR ACADEMIC OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISTURBANCES**

## SPECIAL ISSUES

- ◆ **CRITICAL ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL:  
THE RECOVERY OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY DEPENDS ON THE  
EFFECTIVE LONGTERM LEADERSHIP OF THE PRINCIPAL AND SUSTAINED  
REACHING OUT TO AFFECTED FAMILIES AND STAFF**
  
- ◆ **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION**
  - **VISIBILITY**
  - **PRESENTATION OF SCHOOL-BASED RECOVERY PLAN TO BOARD**
  - **SUPPORT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED**
  - **SUPPORT NEEDED CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS**
  - **LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES**
  
- ◆ **ISSUE OF TEACHER, STAFF TURNOVER, OR LOSS OF ENROLLMENT**
  
- ◆ **SYSTEM TO SHARE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**
  
- ◆ **RELATIONSHIP OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, ESPECIALLY IN SHARING  
RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE**
  
- ◆ **RELATIONSHIP TO PUBLIC AGENCIES**
  - **LOCAL CITY AND COUNTY AGENCIES**
  - **STATE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**
  - **FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**
  - **STATE AND LOCAL VICTIM-WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**
  
- ◆ **RECOGNITION OF CRISIS-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES**
  
- ◆ **ATTENTION TO PERSONAL CARE AND RECOVERY**
  
- ◆ **SUSTAINED OUTREACH TO AFFECTED FAMILIES AND STAFF**
  
- ◆ **RECOGNITION OF STRESS OF NEW CRISIS-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES**