

## What staff can do to help during a crisis event

**Be vigilant and visible.** Stand in an area where you can be observed by students and also pay attention to the environment. Approach and introduce yourself to unfamiliar people in the building. Direct incoming crisis counseling staff, parents, and others to the appropriate area. If members of the media are in the building or on school grounds notify your supervisor immediately.

**Communicate** with your crisis team and other support personnel any concerns you have. Do not assume someone else knows what you know and is doing something about it.

**Be calm** and confident. Most students judge the degree of danger they are in by the behavior of the adults around them. Adults who are unable to remain emotionally composed can unintentionally cause students to feel more anxious, sad or angry. Whatever your role, patience, reassurance and a willingness to listen may be the best things you can provide to students who have placed their individual trust in you.

**Be realistic.** We all have different comfort levels with emotionally charged situations. However, it is important to know your limits and to ask for assistance when you do not feel you can carry out your normal role or a specially assigned task.

**Be assertive** and willing to take charge in a coordinated way with the stated goals of the crisis team. Everyone who is an adult in the building can contribute in some small or large way to the goal of returning the school environment back to the normal routine as soon as it is practically possible. Do not allow any students to wander or be disruptive. Reasonably firm limits provided in a calm and compassionate manner help students to feel a sense of security in their environment. Do not hesitate to seek out counseling staff to assist you with students in your care or area that seem overly upset or disruptive. In the absence of counseling staff all who normally interact with students should take it upon themselves to approach and physically escort overtly distraught students to the appropriate support area.

**Provide information** that is useful and factually-based. Much of what is said by students at times like these may be rumor, speculation or an effort to gauge the reaction of the adults. Verify what you hear and correct unconfirmed rumors. Credible and reasonable explanations that are not moralistic or judgmental, particularly from the educators with whom they have daily contact, allow students to understand how and why an event happened and this information helps to reduce the overall negative impact of the event. When this is done in a calm and authoritative manner student anxiety is further reduced. Within this context, it is important for students to be able to maintain a positive view of the world and a positive view of themselves in spite of what has happened. However, keep in mind that what you say to one student could similarly impact others as they will often pass along to their friends and parents what they hear from those in authority whom they trust and respect.