

## Guidelines for a Parent Group

1. Report the facts. This information should be consistent with information released by the administration, police or other authoritative source.
2. Give an interpretation of the cause of the event.
3. Address emotional and cognitive reactions to the information.
4. Provide information about the intervention activities planned or implemented by the school. This would include a statement about the purpose of the student intervention. The following examples may be stated depending on the situation:

Defusing (A session to defuse thoughts and feelings will, in most cases, have already taken place by the time a parent meeting has occurred.) "We had the students meet in a group so that they could talk about the event. We followed a twelve-step intervention procedure. When a tragedy like this occurs it is important for children to talk about the event, if possible, before they might begin to form an unhealthy attitude about it. We know that when they are encouraged to discuss the event, understand what it all means and obtain support, they are able to recover from the event sooner and may be less likely to develop symptoms of depression or excessive anxiety later on." (Then give a general impression of how the session went.)

Debriefing (A debriefing session may still be in the planning stage when parents are brought together for a meeting.) "When a tragedy like this occurs children will draw certain conclusions about the world and about themselves in relation to the event. In the absence of a healthy discussion some children may develop an unhealthy opinion about themselves and the world. We are planning to follow a ten-step intervention procedure. We are doing this to help the students to process the event. This will also give us the opportunity to correct distorted conclusions that they may have already formed about themselves and their view of the world. We know that when children are encouraged to thoroughly talk about the event and obtain support they are able to recover from the event sooner and may be less likely to develop symptoms of depression or excessive anxiety later on." (Be prepared to state some of the messages you plan to give to the students.)

Highlight information from the "Crisis Bereavement Group Intervention Guidelines Facilitator Outline" showing the sequential format of the intervention used or planned for their child.

5. Although student participation in a group session is voluntary it is important to obtain parental consent if it is practicable to do so.
6. Review the handouts given (or to be given) to their child. This may include information about symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder.
7. If it is judged that some of the students may experience depression or a stress disorder distribute and review "Helping a Child Cope with the Sudden Death of a Friend: A Message to Parents."
8. Respond to all questions as thoroughly as possible. If the tragedy is the result of a suicide or homicide parents will probably want information in relation to risk factors and warning signs. (This information could be developed in advance and in a generic form. When an event occurs this information could easily be modified for the situation at hand.)
9. Provide up-to-date information about mental health counseling and other forms of support within the community.
10. If indicated, establish a date and time for a follow up meeting or provide a phone number for parents to call for additional information as it becomes available.