



U.S. Department of Education (ED)  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)  
Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS)



FY 2010 Initial Grantee Meeting ♦ Santa Monica, CA ♦ December 8 – 9, 2010

## Concurrent Session RECOVERY

*Arthur Cummins*

Director of Safe and Healthy Schools,  
Orange County Office of Education  
(CA)

*Denise Riemer*

Homeless Education Liaison/At-Risk  
Social Worker,  
Mobile County Public School System  
(AL)

### **Purpose of Session**

Present information on the various types and strategies of post-event recovery.

### **Overview of Session**

- ♦ Identify key messages
- ♦ Define the Recovery phase
- ♦ Introduce four key components of Recovery
- ♦ Discuss how to prepare for each component of Recovery
- ♦ Review key “Issues/Debates” in Recovery
- ♦ Discuss Recovery scenario

### **Key Messages**

- ♦ The Recovery phase is designed to assist students, staff, and their families in the healing process and to restore educational operations in schools
- ♦ Success in the Recovery phase is based on pre-planning
- ♦ Strong community partnerships are critical
- ♦ Recovery involves four key components:
  - Physical/structural recovery
  - Business recovery
  - Restoration of academic learning
  - Psychological/emotional recovery
- ♦ The Recovery phase is an ongoing process
- ♦ The type and breadth of Recovery activities needed will vary based on the size and scope of the crisis event



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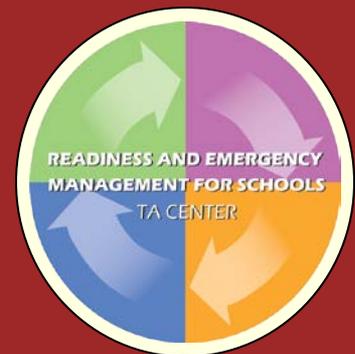
## **About the Presenters**

**ARTHUR CUMMINS, Ed.D.** currently serves youth as Director of Safe and Healthy Schools within the Orange County Department of Education. He has served as a classroom teacher and school site administrator in both middle and high school in the states Oklahoma, Texas, and California. Dr. Cummins also serves as the Southern California Lead for the School and Law Enforcement Partnership, which facilitates collaborative relationships between law enforcement agencies and school district personnel. He also serves on the Executive Board for the California School Resource Officers Association. In addition to holding multiple certifications in emergency management, Dr. Cummins is also an approved trainer for the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation which provides psychological recovery services to school populations.

**DENISE REIMER, LCSW-PIP** has a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and a B.A. in English and History, magna cum laude, from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She has worked for the last fourteen years as a social worker in Mobile, Alabama in various settings.

For the last eight years, Ms. Riemer has been employed by the Mobile County Public School System as an advocate for homeless and at-risk children and families. Additionally, Ms. Riemer was integrally involved in developing and implementing the school system's response to the influx of Hurricanes Katrina/Rita evacuees (3,000 students) in the fall of 2005. She is currently serving as a liaison between the local mental health center and the school system in their response to the Deep Water Horizon oil spill of April 2010 and its affect on students and families.

Previously, she worked for Mobile Infirmary Medical Center as a therapist in the psychiatric unit where she worked with adults with chronic mental illness and substance dependence. Prior to moving to Mobile, Alabama, Ms. Riemer served as a legislative aide from 1991-1994 to U.S. Senator John Breaux (D-LA) in Washington, D.C. in areas of Education, Human Services, Environment, Energy, and Labor. Currently, Ms. Riemer serves as a member of the Mobile Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer Board and the Quality Assurance committee for the Mobile County Department of Human Resources. She was a board member for Family Promise, a local shelter housing homeless families from 2004-2009.



# Recovery

Fiscal Year 2010 Initial Grantee Meeting  
December 8 – 9, 2010, Santa Monica, California



## **Arthur Cummins**

Director Safe and Healthy Schools,  
Orange County Department of Education  
(CA)

## **Denise Riemer**

Homeless and At-Risk Social Worker,  
Mobile (AL) Public Schools

**U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**  
Potomac Center Plaza, 550 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W., 10<sup>th</sup> Floor / Washington, DC 20202

# Overview of Recovery Session

- Define
- Introduce four key components of Recovery
- Discuss how to prepare for each component of Recovery
- Explore issues related to traumatic stress
- Discuss Recovery scenario



# Phases of Emergency Management



# Learning Objectives for Recovery

- Realize the importance of pre-planning for Recovery in the first three phases of emergency management
- Understand the four key components of recovery:
  - Physical/structural Recovery
  - Business Recovery
  - Restoration of academic learning
  - Psychological/emotional Recovery
- The type and breadth of Recovery activities needed will vary based on the size and scope of the crisis event
- Complete an interactive scenario



# What is the Recovery Phase?

- The Recovery phase is designed to:
  - assist students and staff, as needed, with healing and coping, and
  - restore educational operations in schools.
- When does the Recovery phase begin?
- When does it end?



# Goal of the Recovery Phase

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Restore a safe and healthy learning environment.



# Recovery: Four Key Components

- Physical/structural recovery
- Business recovery
- Restoration of academic learning
- Psychological/emotional recovery



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Increase in student absenteeism due to fear:
  - “This heightened sense of fear has caused an alarming increase in school violence (notably fights in the hallways) and a precipitous drop in school attendance rates. Before the incident, the school averaged 60 absences (out of 1,500 students). Since the incident, the absence rate has soared to a consistent rate of 80-100 absences per day.” (student homicide)



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Increase in student absenteeism due to psychosomatic issues:
  - “Students became more aware of their own symptoms and as a result, internalizing behaviors (i.e., anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints) increased, causing a heightened need for emotional support.” (suicide cluster)



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Increase in student violent behavior and disciplinary problems:
  - After the incident, firearms incidents increased 58%, mainly due to fear and students feeling a need to protect themselves.” (school shooting)
  - “The Principal reported that in previous school years there were about 10 discipline referrals per month. Since the incident, the average has increased to about 15 discipline referrals per month. ” (school shooting)



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Decrease in academic performance:
  - “Teachers have noted that many students are having a difficult time focusing on their work in class and out of class, their attention span is affected, some students have taken an ‘I don’t care’ attitude about school work and the upcoming state tests. Other students are acting out in ways they never did before. Teachers are finding it much harder to motivate their students.”  
(suicide cluster)



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Increased student mental health needs:
  - “The emotional impact was strongest for eye-witnesses and exacerbated by being questioned at the police station and told that they may be asked to testify in court. For many students, this latest event overlays past trauma. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome were observed in some students.” (fatal stabbing at school)



# How Do Traumatic Events Impact Teaching and Learning?

- Family concerns about school safety:
  - “The middle school enrollment was only 66% of last year’s. The primary reason given by parents for transferring their students to other districts was fear for their safety and frustration at what was seen as a slow response to problems resulting from the incident.” (school shooting at the high school)



# What is Physical/Structural Recovery?

*Purpose:* Restore educational operations and facilities

*Key steps:*

- Ensure safety at educational sites
- Assess critical infrastructure and support services—What is necessary?
  - Damage Assessment Response Teams (DART)
- Determine availability of equipment and supplies
- Debrief and incorporate lessons learned around physical assets and vulnerabilities into emergency management planning



# How Can Schools Prepare for Physical Recovery Efforts in Advance?

- Steps taken in previous phases may lessen the need for physical Recovery in some areas—examples?
  - Identify potential disaster funding sources and their requirements
  - Establish strategies/policies for receiving donations
  - Consider the structures and departments that will be involved in physical recovery
  - Coordinate with relevant school district departments to discuss recovery plans



# What is Business/Fiscal Recovery?

*Purpose:* To restore critical business functions within the school/district as soon as possible

*A Key component in the Recovery phase, the development of **Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP)** ensures that the capability exists to continue essential functions across a wide range of hazards.*



# COOP Goals

- Allow for its implementation anytime, with or without warning, during duty and non-duty hours;
- Provide full operational capability for essential functions no later than 12 hours after activation; and
- Sustain essential functions for up to 30 days.



# Key Steps to Take During Business Recovery

- Restore district administrative functions
- Ensure staff are supported
- Set-up automatic payment system
- Institute a system to register out of district students, and to register students in new schools



***NOTE:*** The level of COOP activation will be determined by the scope and breadth of the emergency.



# How Can Schools Prepare for Business Recovery Efforts in Advance?

- Identify who is responsible for major administrative functions and develop succession plans
- Identify who has responsibility for closing schools or sending students and staff to alternative locations—what are the criteria?
- Plan for rapid contract execution
- Practice activation of the COOP



# What is Academic Recovery?

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*Purpose:* Facilitate students' return to learning; restore structure and routine

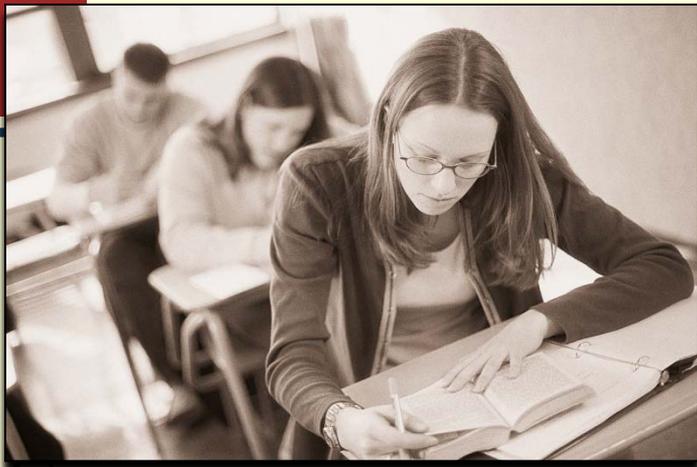
## *Key Steps to ensuring academic Recovery:*

- Institute temporary adjustments to academic routines, as necessary
- Communicate to administrators, staff, parents, guardians and students on events and next steps
- Return to normal academic routine as soon as possible



# Why is Academics Considered in the Recovery Phase?

- Youth exposed to repeated violence and trauma have been shown to have:
  - Lower grade point averages (Hurt et al., 2001)
  - Decreased reading ability (Delaney-Black et al., 2003)
  - More reported absences from school (Hurt et al., 2001)
  - Increased expulsions and suspensions (LAUSD survey)
  - Decreased rates of high school graduation (Grogger, 1997)
- Restoring, or maintaining, a routine is helpful for students throughout the Recovery process



# What to Expect in Schools in Absence of Intervention

- ↓ Cognitive functioning and academic achievement (anxiety, ↓ concentration, sleep problems, depression)
- ↑ Absenteeism (school avoidance)
- ↑ Suspensions/expulsions (irritability, social regression, substance abuse)
- → → ↓ Graduation
- Taking time in schools to help children adjust to disaster and aftermath is essential to promote academic achievement



# What is Psychological/Emotional Recovery?

*Purpose:* Promote coping and support resiliency for students and staff following an emergency

*Key Steps to promoting Psychological/Emotional Recovery:*

- Recognize the factors that may impact Psychological/Emotional Recovery
- Address issues related to traumatic stress
- Short- and long-term interventions may be necessary
- Work with internal and external partners who can provide support services—pre-screening is critical
- Training of school and district-level mental health recovery teams

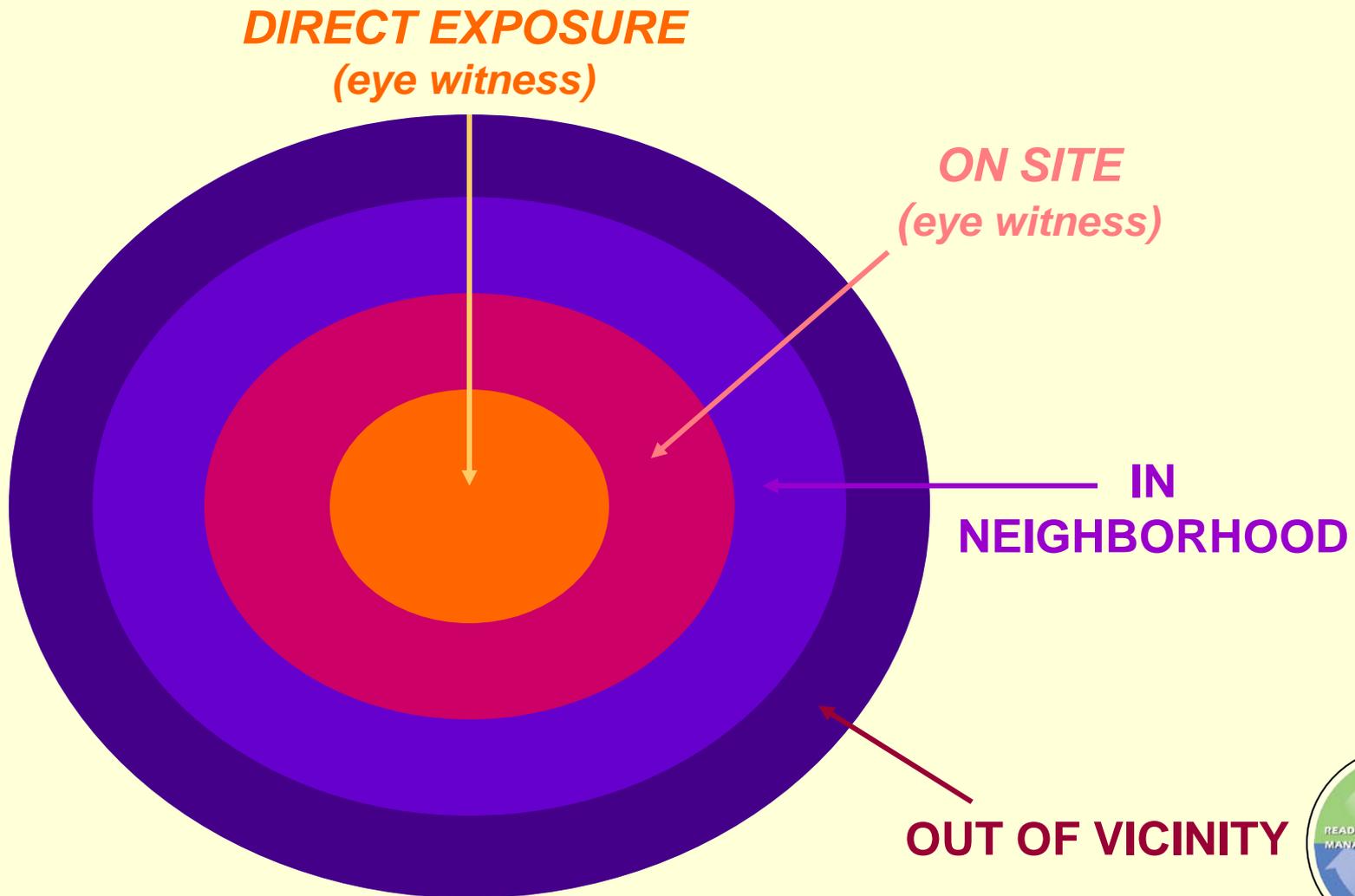


# What is Traumatic Stress?

- Traumatic stress is an acute distress response that is experienced after exposure to a catastrophic event
- Traumatic stress occurs because the event poses a serious, or perceived, threat to:
  - The individual's life or physical integrity
  - The life of a family member or close friend
  - One's surrounding environment



# Circles of Impact



# How Can Schools Support Psychological/Emotional Recovery in the Short-Term?

- Identify circles of impact and provide triage
  - Provide mental health resource materials for families, students, and staff
- Consider Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S)
- Make individual and group crisis counseling available during the first week after an emergency
- Promote self-care among staff and utilize Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Be aware of prior history of risk taking or trauma



# How Can Schools Support Psychological/Emotional Recovery in the Long-Term?

- Based on information gained in short-term intervention, refer students and staff to long-term interventions
- Trauma and grief focused school-based mental health programs
  - Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)
  - Supports for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET)

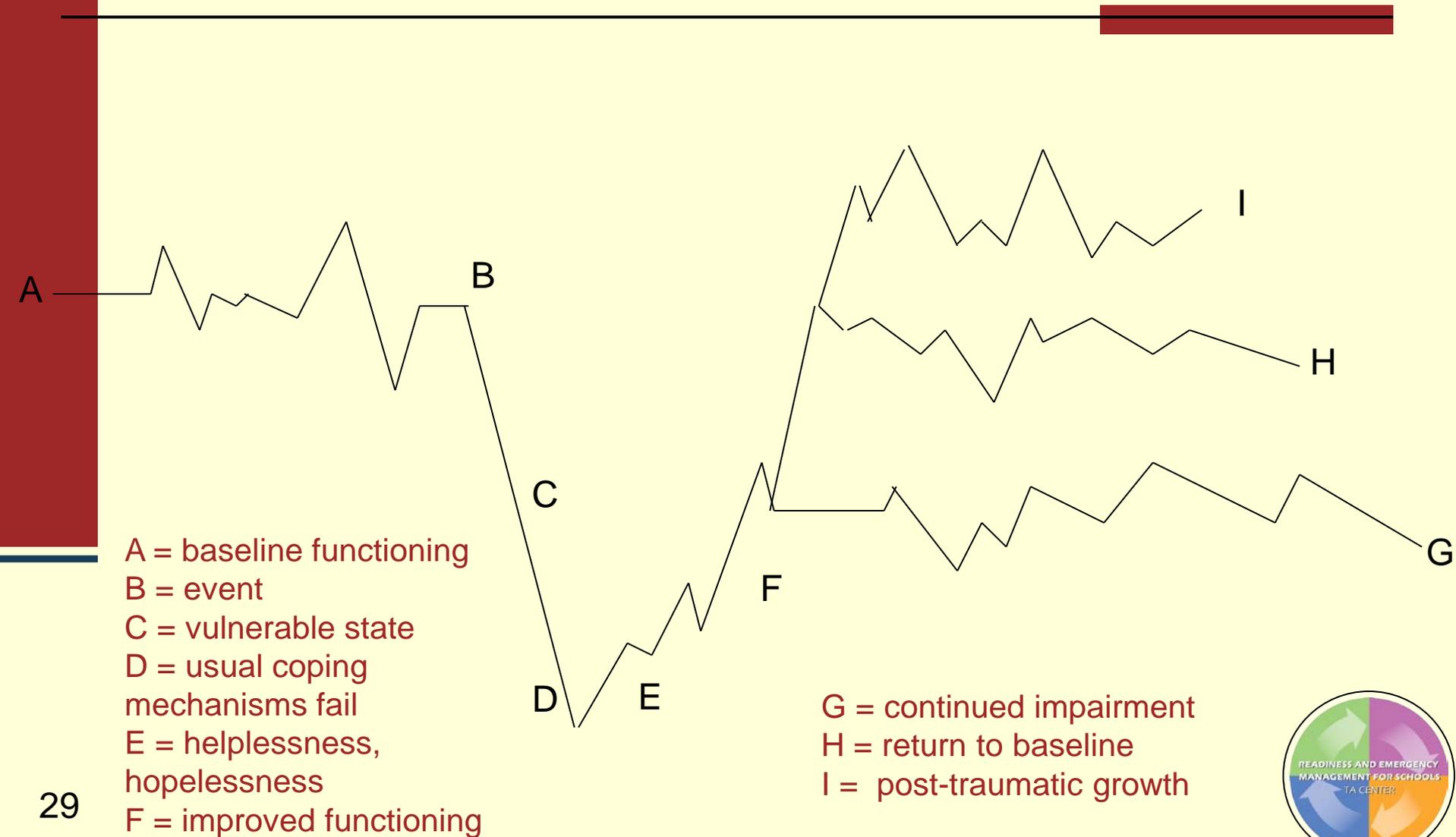


# How Can Schools Support Psychological/ Emotional Recovery in the Long-Term?

- Conduct ongoing assessment/monitoring of mental health of students and staff
- Monitor attendance, grades, and counselor's visits
- Provide care for caregivers (compassion fatigue)
- Reinforce ongoing prevention programs
- Be aware of 'key dates,' such as trials, anniversaries, and holidays
- Modify lesson plans and/or testing plans, if needed



# Adjustment Over Time in Crisis



# How Can Schools Prepare for Psychological/ Emotional Recovery in Advance?

- Develop template letters (that can be tailored) for alerting parents, families, guardians, students, and staff to emergencies
- Outline strategies for dealing with “empty chairs”
- Consider a district policy for memorials
- Ensure a process is in place for parental consent for receipt of mental health services



# Key Issues for the Recovery Phase

*Issue #1:* Opening or closing schools after an emergency

## ■ Considerations:

- How long should the school be closed?
- How can parents/guardians weigh in on decisions about school closures?
- Who has the ultimate decision-making power regarding school closure?
- How will the community be notified?
- Ultimate question—Will the children be better off in school, or out of school?

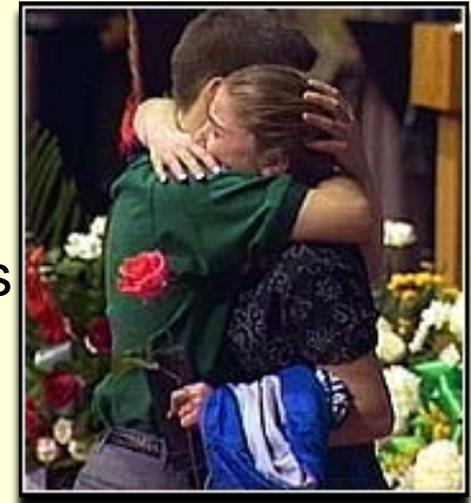


# Key Issues for the Recovery Phase

*Issue #2:* Memorials after a student or staff death

■ Considerations:

- Memorials can be controversial
- Questions may arise about how/if policies should vary depending on the type of death
- Memorials in schools should not add to the suicide “contagion effect”
- A date for removing memorial items
- How memorials might reinforce ongoing prevention programming (i.e., scholarship funds, etc.)



# Key Issues for the Recovery Phase

## *Issue #3: How to handle key dates*

### ■ Considerations:

- Be cognizant of anniversary dates but do not dramatize them
- Watch for reactions around holidays, anniversaries, and/or trial dates
- Prepare a constructive message for anniversaries
- Make sure educators watch for risk behaviors



# Summary

- Planning for Recovery develops from the first three phases of emergency management
- There are four key components of recovery:
  - Physical/Structural Recovery
  - Business Recovery
  - Academic Recovery
  - Psychological/Emotional Recovery
- The type and breadth of Recovery activities needed will vary based on the size and scope of the crisis event



# Interactive Scenario



# Scenario

- You are a member of the emergency management team at YOUR school.
- It's early morning.
- School has just begun for the day.
- One school bus is late arriving due to ice on the roads.



# Details of the Incident

- The bus has 26 students from the middle and high schools on board (ages 10–17).
- As the bus arrives, the driver is unable to stop the bus. The bus skids and then crashes through the wall of the music room. There are 25 students in the music room.
- Two students are killed and 19 students are injured—four of them severely.
- The bus driver was found to be intoxicated.



**What are the first  
three steps you  
would take as an  
emergency  
management team  
member?**



**Which students and staff are most in need of crisis counseling?**



# Additional Questions:

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- What will be your short term mental health recovery/psychological first aid plan?
- How will you respond to parents?



# Final Questions:

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- What will be your mid- to long-term mental health recovery plans?
- If, in the days and weeks after this event students and parents want to construct a memorial – and the newspaper editors also share that view – what will be your decision?
- How should we plan for the anniversary?



# Resources

- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, Bereavement Guidelines (for responding to the death of a student or staff member)
  - <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/guidelines-bereavement.htm>
- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, Template Letters for Parents, Students and Staff During Times of Loss
  - <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/letters-template.htm>
- How Children Grieve: And How Parents and Other Adults Can Support Them
  - <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/parent-guide.htm>
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management COOP Toolkit
  - <http://www.vaemergency.com/library/coop/index.cfm>

