

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

1. Create a **crisis team**.
 - Typical crisis team members include:
 - School administrator
 - School counselor/psychologist
 - Front office staff
 - Nurse
 - Transportation representative
 - Maintenance
 - Spokesperson (public information officer)
2. **Partner** with outside mental health agencies, media and law enforcement.
 - Develop and identify external partners:
 - Consider local mental health agencies who may be able to assist
 - Develop a structure for support
 - Be aware of issues around “outside” vs. “inside” help
 - Outline partnership agreements with relevant local partners.
 - Identify a school/district employee to coordinate partnerships with the community—a liaison officer.
3. Establish **policies**.
 - Outline strategies for dealing with “empty chairs.”
 - Consider a district policy for memorials (be consistent across events).
 - Ensure a process is in place for parental consent for receipt of mental health services should they be needed.
 - Outline how to handle key dates.
4. Create **template letters** as part of the school's emergency management plan.
 - Develop template letters (that can be tailored) for alerting parents, families, guardians, students, and staff to emergencies.
 - These letters can be adapted with specific information following a death and will help eliminate potential lengthy discussions on what should be included in the letter.
 - Sample letters for parents, students, and staff can be found at <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/letters-template.htm>.
5. **Train** appropriate staff.
 - Identify and train appropriate staff to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate mental health services.
 - Train mental health staff on specific interventions.
 - Provide basic training on available resources and common reactions to trauma for all staff (including administrators).
 - Provide specific information to all staff regarding the school's referral system (e.g., inform teachers about who students can go to for support and the referral systems available).
 - Train teachers/staff on early warning signs and on how to work with parents/guardians.
6. Establish system for **mass communication** to parents and staff.
 - Verify the information from family or local authorities.
 - Determine what information the family would like to have disclosed.
 - Notify the staff and students.

7. Understand **HIPAA** and **FERPA** regulations.
 - Protects the privacy of individually identifiable health information and the privacy of student education records.
 - Applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Learn about the HIPAA's protection of the privacy of individually identifiable health information at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/index.html>.
 - Access a summary of FERPA regulations at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.
8. Be aware of various **cultural and religious perspectives** on death and bereavement.
 - Realize grief, death, and mourning rituals differ.
 - Recognize that differences in views and customs on death vary widely among cultures and religions.
9. Establish a system for handling **volunteers** and **donations**.
 - Pre-determine strategies for accepting contributions/donations following a death/incident.
 - Identify tracking procedures necessary for monetary contributions, and donations of goods and services.