Best Practices for Supporting Recovery after a School Shooting

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Wide range of reactions after a school shooting

• Traumatic reactions/disorders
• Bereavement
• A crisis is generally followed by a cascade of secondary losses and stressors
• Crisis events uncover prior trauma or loss, even if unrelated to event
Trauma and loss are common; training is not

- 1 out of 20 children experience the death of a parent
- 9 out of 10 experience the death of a close relative or friend by the time they complete high school
- <10% of educators receive any training on how to support grieving children → the main factor limiting their ability and willingness to provide support
- Saying nothing says a lot to children – it tells them you either are unaware, unconcerned, unwilling or unable to be of assistance
Recovery funding is often insufficient

- It’s important to provide support to students and staff until recovery is completed – which often takes years
- The timeframe for federal funding for recovery isn’t aligned with timeline for recovery
- Amount of funding is often less than scope of need
Effects of the Word Trade Center Attack on NYC Public School Students

Applied Research and Consulting, LLC, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, NY State Psychiatric Institute

• Over 8,000 students grades 4-12
• 1 of 4 surveyed 6 months after 9-11 met criteria for one or more probable psychiatric disorders: PTSD (11%), major depressive disorder (8%), separation anxiety disorder (12%), panic attacks (9%), agoraphobia (15%)
• Estimated that 250,000 students required counseling
• 87% reported at least 1 trauma symptom 6 months later
• Majority had neither received nor sought mental health treatment
Shouldn’t rely on individual treatment alone

• A school response is not the same as providing individual evaluation, referral and treatment to everyone in the school

• Teachers, school administrators and staff can have a profound impact by providing compassionate support, as well as identifying students who may benefit from additional mental health services

• Preferred model is to educate all professionals in a child’s caring community, building their capacity to respond long-term
Training is important prior to an event

- Training has not been a priority in teacher preparation coursework nor in professional development
- Often sought only in the aftermath of event
- Just in time training is not in time
- Preparedness involves not just preparing to respond, but also preparing to recover
- The solutions ought to be broadly relevant and applied in all communities
National Commission on Children and Disasters
Teacher Training Recommendation

• Congress and Education Department should award funding to states to teach educators basic skills in providing support to grieving students and students in crisis, and establish statewide requirements related to teacher certification and recertification.

• Similar recommendation from:
  – Disaster Mental Health Subcommittee, National Biodefense Science Board FAC
  – Sandy Hook Advisory Commission
Training for teachers and other school personnel

• Impact of trauma and bereavement on children and their learning
• Likely reactions
• Practical strategies for providing psychological first aid, brief supportive services, bereavement support, and academic accommodations
• Indications for referral for mental health services
• Goal is to help educators and other school personnel create a supportive environment
Coalition to Support Grieving Students

- Lead Founding Members – New York Life Foundation and NCSCB
- American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- American School Counselors Association (ASCA)
- National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
- National Association of School Nurses (NASN)
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- National Education Association (NEA)
- School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA)
- School Superintendents Association (AASA)
Supporting Organizational Members

[Logos of various organizations listed]
Friends of the Coalition

Adam's Place
The Center for Grieving Children
Children's Grief Center of New Mexico
Ele's Place
Hospice of Santa Barbara
Kate's Club
The Mark Wandall Foundation
New Hope for Kids
Rainbows for All Children

Bo's Place
Children's Bereavement Center
Children's Grief Connection
Highmark Caring Place
Imagine, a Center for Coping with Loss
Kids Count Too!
Michael's Place
OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center
When Jade Smiles

Brighter Days Grief Center
Children's Grief Center Great Lakes Bay Region
Cornerstone of Hope
Hospice Caring, Inc.
Kara
Lost & Found Grief Center
Mourning Hope Grief Center
Pathways Center for Grief & Loss
Valerie's House
www.grievingstudents.org
For further information about NCSCB visit us, call us, like us, share us:

1-888-53-NCSCB (1-888-536-2722)

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National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement
www.schoolcrisiscenter.org
After a loved one dies—
How children grieve and how parents and other adults can support them.