



School
Emergency
Mental Health
Response
Resource
Binder
for School
Administrators



This binder was developed by the School Emergency Mental Health Response Planning Committee with funds from the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County • January 2003



COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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January 17, 2003

Dear School Site Administrators:

In the event of a traumatic event or natural disaster, school administrators are presented with the task of responding with quickness and calm in a chaotic environment. The purpose of the Santa Cruz County School Emergency Mental Health Response Protocol and the accompanying materials in this binder is to provide you with easy access to resources should an emergency situation occur at your school site. The Protocol will provide districts access to the necessary mental health response when it is beyond the ability of the district to provide services in an effective and timely manner.

The Santa Cruz County School Emergency Response Planning Project, funded by the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, developed the contents of this binder. You are encouraged to use the materials in the binder for distribution to your staff and school community. The materials are intended to serve as guidelines. Please assess individual needs, developmental stages, cultural background, and the severity of the trauma when you use the materials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane K. Siri".

Diane K. Siri, Ed.D.,
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools.

School Emergency Mental Health Response Protocol

Introduction

Over two years ago Patricia Schroeder and Maryanne Tong from the Santa Cruz City Schools consulted with Diane Bridgeman, Coordinator of the Santa Cruz County American Red Cross Disaster mental health team. The school district was addressing the mental health and logistical impact of having to respond simultaneously to more than one critical incident. The District's mental health response team was often at its limit in being able to respond adequately or sustain long-term follow-up.

With the intent of providing an effective, comprehensive school emergency mental health response plan, other school districts and public and private agencies were invited to a meeting to discuss a coordinated school site emergency mental health response. School districts, the County Office of Education, law enforcement, County Mental Health, the Red Cross, Youth Services, and the Center for Grief and Loss of Hospice, among others, attend the meeting. The group decided to meet monthly, calling itself the School Emergency Response Planning (SERP) committee.

SERP identified the need for a countywide school emergency mental health response protocol, generic mental health response materials for site administrators to disseminate to staff, students, families and the media, mental health response training for school site staff, and curriculum resources. With leadership from the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, a proposal to fund SERP activities was submitted to the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County. The proposal was funded. A protocol was developed and approved by the County Schools Superintendents' Council. Materials were developed.

In the School Emergency Mental Health Response binder you will find samples of letters that alert teachers and parents to certain signs and how best to cope with and normalize their students' responses to traumatic events. Handouts are included for teachers and for students themselves. Especially important are the lists of web sites for additional resources and for materials in other languages.

Finally, at many of our monthly meetings, we discussed the importance of stressing the ethical needs for preventive strategies such as practices that would encourage a mitigation and limitation when possible to critical incidents and traumatic events. Web site resources in the binder refer to examples of such preventive programs.

I want to thank all the members of the SERP Committee for investing their time, talent and dedication to this effort. Also, appreciation is extended to the Santa Cruz County Office of Education for supporting SERP, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County for their financial support and positive encouragement of this work, to Sue Faix for coordinating all the SERP activities, to the Santa Cruz Chapter of the American Red Cross and the Center for Grief and Loss of Hospice for contributing their extensive materials, and to all the others who contributed to the success of this project.

Diane Bridgeman, Ph.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
American Red Cross Instructor & Disaster Mental Health Coordinator
President, Monterey Bay Psychological Association

Santa Cruz County

School Emergency Response

Planning Project Steering Committee

Special thanks to the following members of the Steering Committee for their long hours of tireless devotion to the development of this project:

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Diane Bridgeman	American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Coordinator Monterey Bay Psychological Association President
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Gail Levine	Assistant Principal New Brighton Middle School
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Marcia Meyer	Coordinator, Educational Services Division Santa Cruz County Office of Education
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Peter Spofford	Emergency Disaster Coordinator Santa Cruz County Mental Health
Sharon Smith	Administrator Pacific Elementary School District
Sue Faix	Community Outreach and Crisis Coordinator Youth Services, SCCOE, (SERP) Project Coordinator

Thank you

The Santa Cruz County School Emergency Response Planning Project (SERP) **THANKS** the following agencies and organizations for contributing their support and/or articles for inclusion in this resource binder.

American Psychological Association

American Red Cross

American Red Cross Mental Health Response

Center for Grief and Loss of Hospice Caring Project

Educational Leadership

Department of Pediatrics

University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Live Oak School District

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

National Association of School Psychologists

National Institute of Mental Health

Pacific Elementary School District

Santa Cruz City Police Department

Santa Cruz City Schools

Santa Cruz County Mental Health

Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Santa Cruz Sentinel

San Francisco Unified School District

San Lorenzo Valley School District

Scotts Valley Middle School

Sheriff Coroner Office–Detention Bureau

Soquel Union Elementary School District

Suicide Prevention

Watsonville Police Department

Youth Services

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