

SECTION 300 – General Administration

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: TRAUMATIC EVENT & CRISIS
RESPONSE**

PROCEDURE CODE:	300 AP 003
Policy Reference: 300 – Emergency and Crisis Management	Exhibits:

OVERVIEW

In the event of a critical incident the Division Traumatic Event and Crisis Response Team (herein after referred to as the Response Team) will meet to determine the degree of crisis and necessary steps to support students, staff, and families. It is the responsibility of the Response Team to determine if the critical incident is classified as a traumatic event, a high impact crisis, or a low impact crisis, and to determine the response accordingly, as per the Traumatic Event Systems Protocol. The Traumatic Event Systems Protocol should be followed as outlined in this procedure.

The Response Team consists of the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent of Student Services, the Director of Psychology Services, Communications Manager, School Administration, and the Family School Liaison Worker Team (FSLWs). Additionally, other staff may be called upon by the Response Team as applicable, including, but not limited to, Health & Wellness Manager, Occupational Health & Safety Officer, Transportation Coordinator, additional Central Office staff, teachers, guidance counsellors/advisors, School Resource Officers, Mental Health Capacity Building Program Manager, success coaches, and school bus drivers. Community partners may be called upon depending on the nature of the incident. The Response Team convenes upon notification of a critical incident and meets to plan a response to the incident and ensures all necessary supports and services are in place for students, staff, and families.

DEFINITIONS

Primary Site – the site at which the critical incident has occurred and is most impacted by the event; may also be referred to as Ground Zero.

Secondary Site(s) – additional school site(s) that may be impacted by the critical incident; for example, these sites may include schools the student of concern previously attended, or schools where they have siblings. Secondary sites may also be referred to as secondary trauma sites when a traumatic event occurs.

Critical Incident – for the purposes of this document, the term critical incident encompasses any unexpected event that requires a crisis response, and includes traumatic events, high impact crises, and low impact crises.

Traumatic Event – a highly unexpected event in which the magnitude of the trauma response is so great that the system where the event occurred cannot effectively deal with the needs of its members alone. Traumatic events impact multiple systems and require the support of additional resources from outside the system in which it occurs, such as community partners, to respond appropriately. In these cases, the ability to predict who is most likely to be seriously affected is significantly diminished.

Crisis – a crisis occurs when a system (i.e., school and/or community) is confronted with a significant change in current functioning due to a tragedy or loss that impacts the functioning of its members. Crises are an expected event that are containable within the system where they occur. The system and its natural extensions have adequate resources to respond to the crisis and there is a high level of predictability regarding who is most likely to be impacted.

Critical Period – a unique but predictable time frame for increased symptom development in both individuals and systems

Shadow Team – a team comprising of retired or substitute administrators, additional FSLWs, central office, and other staff as assigned that is called in to support with the day-to-day operations of a school during a critical incident.

PROCEDURES

Phase 1: Critical Response

1. Notification processes – notification of any critical incident must be reported to the Superintendent as soon as school staff have been made aware of its occurrence. The Superintendent will confirm the occurrence of the critical incident through communication with the Medicine Hat Police Service, as required. The Superintendent notifies other key personnel (as identified above) and calls the Response Team to meet. The Superintendent notifies other Central Office personnel, as well as division school administrators of the critical incident.

If Victim's Assistance is involved with the family, they will act as a liaison between the family and school division by obtaining consent to both inform and share information with the school division to respect the family's privacy and minimize intrusions during a difficult time.

2. Deployment of Response Team - the Response Team is deployed to the incident site to ensure all individuals on site have the opportunity to access support per their individual needs. Should it be determined later on that the Response Team is no longer needed, they will exit the site and remain on standby until otherwise directed. Deployment of the Response Team to the primary incident site is not optional. Secondary sites may also request and receive support independently of the primary site.
3. The Response Team meets to determine the type of critical incident, the degree of response required, assembles additional members of the Response Team that are to be deployed to



the incident site, and determines a communication point with the family, as well as obtains consent to share information if not already provided through Victim's Assistance. The Response team also determines the need for shadow teams during this meeting; shadow teams may include shadow administrators, FSLWs, Central Office staff, and any others as determined by the Response Team. Shadow teams may be adjusted throughout the crisis response as needed.

4. School staff are notified of the critical incident by administration. Staff who are determined to be most impacted by the critical incident meet to discuss support and to ensure appropriate support is in place for students most likely to be impacted. An all-staff meeting may be held in the morning depending on circumstances and the time of staff notification. The purpose of this meeting is information sharing and provision of a plan for the day.
5. The Associate Superintendent of Student Services notifies community partners and surrounding school divisions including, but not limited to, Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education, Prairie Rose School Division, Alberta Health Services Mental Health & Addiction Services, Child & Family Services Southeast Alberta Region, Medicine Hat Police Service (if not already notified), and Medicine Hat College, of the critical incident.
6. Parent notification of the critical incident is provided by the Communications Manager and includes information on support and resources available to students and families. Office staff at both the incident site(s) and Central Office are provided with a script to guide responses regarding the incident; media inquiries are directed to the Communications Manager.
7. Students are notified of the critical incident by school administrators, along with classroom teachers and division mental health supports such as the FSLW or the division psychologist if parent notification ahead of time is not possible (i.e. the critical incident happens during the school day). A script for speaking to students about the critical incident will be provided to staff by the Director of Psychology Services.
8. Mental health crisis support is dispatched and put in place for students and staff to access throughout the day. FSLWs and other required counselling supports (from community or surrounding school divisions) are available on site to students in both primary and secondary locations. Mental health supports are triaged based on assessment of student need using psychological first aid. Support is determined and available on three levels: general classroom interventions, individual interventions, and high-risk interventions. High-risk students and staff that are identified will be referred to additional emergent mental health support outside of school for continuing care. Students and staff requiring follow-up counselling support are identified on site by mental health practitioners. *Therapy dogs are also available to support students and staff as requested.
9. FSLWs and counselling staff will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of any students that are predicted to be impacted or who have sought out support during the day. This may include



students who were not at school or who staff were unable to connect/debrief with during the day. At this time, they can discuss resources, strategies, and additional crisis support as needed.

10. In the event that evacuation of the incident site is required, the Communications Manager and Associate Superintendent of Student Services will work with the Transportation Coordinator to ensure the safe and timely evacuation of students, staff and others on site to a reunification site. Should the incident site need to remain closed for an extended period of time, an alternative location for school operations will be arranged by the Superintendent (or designate) to minimize any disruption to the learning of students.
11. The Response Team will determine the need for a parent and/or community meeting dependent upon the nature of the critical incident.
12. The Response Team will consult with Kevin Cameron, Executive Director of the Centre for Trauma Informed Practices, as necessary.
13. At the end of the school day, an all staff debrief meeting will be held to address staff questions, concerns, and discuss available support services, as well as to discuss any other pertinent issues such as planning for the next day, continued supports available to students and families, etc. The Director of Psychology Services, Superintendent, and school Administrator will join the end of day debrief (10-15 min).

Phase 2: Stabilization (Two Week Period Following Critical Incident)

1. During the two weeks following the critical incident there may be a continued presence of the Shadow Team on site to support day-to-day school operations.
2. Additional counselling support remains available to students at both the primary site and any secondary site. FSLWs and other mental health team members work to coordinate longer term support outside of school for students and staff identified as requiring more intensive follow-up support.
3. The Director of Psychology provides ongoing check-ins with site administrators and staff to identify ongoing areas of need, students of concern, and any other additional support that may be required. Identified additional supports are provided in a timely manner, and may involve extra FSLW support on site, liaising with community partners to deliver universal interventions to students and staff, etc. Secondary sites also continue to receive check-ins and ongoing supports as well. Supportive universal activities may be organized through the school HUG or Success Coaches, as required.
4. The need for a parent or community meeting continues to be monitored by the Response Team and is provided should it be deemed necessary. MHPSD may liaise with sister school divisions and community partners to organize and host the community meeting.



5. A two-week follow-up debriefing session is held with administration and key staff to determine areas of need that may extend beyond the two-week critical period. Areas of concern that may be identified include students and staff who continue to be at risk, environmental conditions that may be triggering, and the degree to which ongoing support is required. Information should be provided on the impact of trauma on systems at this time.
6. The Health & Wellness Manager attends a check-in during the stabilization period along with the Director of Psychology and Administration to share resources and support available to staff.
7. The Occupational Health & Safety Officer reviews and debriefs Hour Zero protocols with the Associate Superintendent of Student Services to ensure proper procedures were followed during the incident. Consideration should be given to any policies or procedures that require revising with future incidents in mind.
8. Refer to the MHPSD Administrative Procedure on memorials as required.

Phase 3: Future Planning & Considerations

1. Debriefs occur with the Response Team, school teams, and community partners as needed.
2. Special consideration should be given to the need for any additional resources for students and staff, such as continued work with community partners, professional development, social and emotional learning, and continued monitoring of high-risk individuals.
3. Assessment of the need for a parent or community meeting continues to be ongoing.
4. A critical analysis of the incident response should be undertaken, with attention given to lessons learned or areas of further consideration for future critical incidents.
5. The Response Team and School Administration should continue to be mindful of upcoming critical periods and plan for these accordingly, as per the Traumatic Event Systems Protocol.
6. In the event of future critical incidents, it is prudent to be aware of the impact of past critical incidents on school staff and resources, including who should be assigned to assist as well as when and where it is best for them to do so.

MHPSD Traumatic Event & Crisis Response Procedures has been developed in accordance with and adapted from the Traumatic Event Systems (TES) Model of Crisis & Trauma Response Handbook 2nd Edition (2019), North American Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Response

Approved: October 7, 2024

