



CRISIS COUNSELING & INTERVENTION SERVICES

COLLABORATE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

WHEN A SCHOOL BECOMES A CRIME SCENE OR CLOSED AREA

Guidelines from Los Angeles School Police Department

(213) 625-6631

The goals of law enforcement personnel in general are to stop criminal acts, to apprehend suspects, to assist victims, to collect and preserve evidence, and protect life and property. When a criminal act or significant incident or natural disaster occurs or is suspected on a school campus or immediately outside the perimeter of a campus, police may designate all or a portion of the campus as a "crime scene" from which evidence must be sought, gathered and properly stored for further use during an investigation or a legal proceeding; or be designated as a "closed area" for purposes of public safety.

School administrators and staff should not enter a marked or otherwise identified crime scene or closed area or interfere with a police investigation. Likewise, students, parents and community members must not be allowed to enter, interfere with or "contaminate" a crime scene or enter a closed area. **Persons not authorized to be within an identified crime scene or closed area are themselves subject to arrest.**

1. Law enforcement personnel will establish a "crime scene" under various circumstances that present crime scene evidence or there is a necessity to preserve a scene for accurate and uncontaminated investigative documentation. This includes, but is not limited to the following conditions:
 - Murder or suicide.
 - Death due to suspicious circumstances.
 - When the victim of a crime may possibly die.
 - For serious crimes with or without injuries to students, staff or others (crimes including but not limited to vandalism (hate crimes), arson, suspicious packages/possible explosive devices).
 - Accidents of significant proportion, injuries or death.
2. **Only** authorized law enforcement and fire department personnel are allowed inside a designated crime scene area or closed area.
3. The first police officer(s) to arrive on scene will have specific duties to perform to ensure the protection of the crime scene or closed area. If officers seem impatient or abrupt toward staff, it is likely due to their attention to these necessary tasks. Despite the sometimes chaotic nature that characterizes many crises, the police and firefighters must be permitted to do their jobs according to established procedures.
4. *The Incident Commander will identify* who will serve as the liaison with the school's administration.

5. Depending on the size and the nature of the crime scene, or other significant incident creating a closed area, **the *Incident Commander* will determine if and when crisis team members or other support personnel from outside the school can enter the campus** to begin their intervention assessments and follow-up activities. It would thus be useful for school site administrators to identify **in advance** one or two adjacent locations that could be used on a temporary basis by other crisis team and support personnel to check in and establish contact with school site staff until access to the campus is allowed.
6. School administrators may be asked to provide one or more on-campus locations to isolate witnesses for questioning by law enforcement personnel. Keeping witnesses apart helps to preserve the integrity, clarity and objectivity of each person's account.

***Note: Death notifications to next-of-kin is the responsibility of law enforcement personnel.**