Responding to Crisis Incidents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.
   • Address the feeling(s)/behavior(s) as soon as possible.
   • If a student wants to talk, be prepared to listen and focus on what s/he says and how you can be of help.
   • Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that student(s) may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.
   • Express compassion and calmness in your statements as well as nonverbal behaviors.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.
   • Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules.
   • Provide supervision and consistency to encourage successful outcomes.
   • Monitor conversations that students may engage in or hear.
   • Give information that is accurate and age-appropriate.
   • Keep the environment free of anything that could re-traumatize the student.
   • Validate the student’s life experience.
   • Maintain confidentiality as appropriate.

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.
   • “Check in” with student(s) on a regular basis.
   • Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g. Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse) and community health/mental health services. Make referrals to the appropriate resources who may offer support to student(s).
   • Encourage interactions, activities, and team projects with friends and teachers.
   • Keep communication open with others involved in the student(s) lives (e.g. parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
   • Note: Consult with DCFS if you suspect child abuse and/or neglect.

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.
   • Model healthy responses by remaining calm, courteous, organized, and helpful.
   • Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings and reactions about the event. In the midst of a crisis, students are often watching for verbal and nonverbal cues by the adults they are with, which may influence how students cope and behave.
   • Take constructive actions to assure safety.
   • Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.
   • Practice self-care.

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.
   • Students may have different reactions even to the same event.
   • Encourage students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
   • Help your students to problem solve to get through each day successfully.
   • Help students set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins.”
   • Note: With time and support, students generally do better. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a parent/guardian or a school staff member.