



**TITLE:** Organizing for Crisis Intervention

**NUMBER:** BUL-962.1

**ISSUER:** Dan M. Isaacs, Chief Operating Officer  
Office of the Chief Operating Officer

**DATE:** December 7, 2005

**ROUTING**  
Local District  
Superintendents  
Local District School  
Support Directors  
Local District  
Operations Coordinators  
Administrators

**POLICY:** Crisis response procedures are required under California State Education Code, Section 35294.2 (a)(2)(B).

**MAJOR CHANGES:** This bulletin replaces Office of the Chief Operating Officer Bulletin No. 962, dated, May 12, 2004, titled Organizing for Crisis Intervention. It provides direction for the organization and use of crisis intervention teams to help schools respond appropriately to crises.

**GUIDELINES:** The following guidelines apply.

I. BACKGROUND

As a result of the sniper attack at 49<sup>th</sup> Street School in 1984 and the recognition that a variety of crisis situations can and do occur in a district of this size, a task force developed and published, in the 1986 bulletin, the first guidelines for psychological first-aid preparedness.

The necessity of responding to a variety of crises in the District over the past two decades prompted the development of a comprehensive crisis intervention plan. The plan addresses the following concerns: 1) how to respond appropriately to incidents that could precipitate a crisis; 2) how to re-establish the safety and security of the school site; and 3) how to provide appropriate psychological intervention services that can help minimize and perhaps prevent emotional damage to those who are affected.

Since the issuance of the original bulletin, there have been many events and incidents in the District schools which have resulted in a need for intervention services to help students and/or staff deal with psychological trauma. Intervention during crisis situations has become widely recognized as a necessary action in order to prevent or minimize the emotional damage to the persons involved.



This bulletin provides direction to schools in the organization and use of crisis teams and in preparation for appropriate response to threats and crisis situations.

## II. NEED FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION FOLLOWING A CRISIS

- A. This bulletin primarily emphasizes intervention and subsequent actions for crises that have a major psychological impact on schools and communities, such as an act of violence, the death of a student or staff member, an earthquake or other natural disaster, a serious environmental problem, or ethnic and racial tensions.
- B. Crises like those described above usually produce one or more of the following conditions:
  - 1. Temporary disruption of regular school functions and routines.
  - 2. Significant interference with the ability of students and staff to focus on learning.
  - 3. Physical and/or psychological injury to students and staff.
  - 4. Concentrated attention from the community and news media.
- C. A crisis has the potential to affect an entire school and community. For example, a depressed or suicidal student might need personal intervention services that can be provided by a single trained professional. However, an attempted or completed suicide by a student potentially will impact others and might require more of an organized team effort.

As a result of a crisis, people have a variety of psychological reactions. As soon as the physical safety of those involved has been insured, attention must turn to meeting their emotional and psychological needs.

## III. ORGANIZING FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION AT LOCAL SCHOOLS

- A. Every Safe School Plan should include a detailed description of the process that has been established to help students, staff, parents and the community deal with emotional and psychological reactions that might occur as the result of a crisis.



**B. School Crisis Team**

1. Under the direction of the principal or designee, every school shall establish a crisis team, which has primary responsibility for providing necessary assistance after all types of crises (see section II.B.). The responsibilities of the crisis team shall be included in the Safe Schools Plan.
2. Responsibilities of the school crisis team include:
  - a. Initiating the crisis intervention component of the Safe Schools Plan.
  - b. Assessing the range of crisis intervention services needed.
  - c. Providing direct intervention services.
  - d. Determining if there is a need for additional assistance from the Local District Operations Coordinator or the Local District Superintendent.
  - e. Advising and assisting the principal or designee to restore regular school functions and routines as efficiently and as quickly as possible.
  - f. Limiting exposure to scenes of trauma, injury and death.
  - g. Providing ongoing assessment of needs and follow-up services, as required.
3. School crisis team members shall be selected from regular school staff and from Local District personnel assigned to the schools (e.g., administrators, teachers, clerical and support staff, school nurses, psychologists, police officers, PSA counselors, psychiatric social workers, etc.). Schools on multi-track schedules shall include staff from all tracks. All teams shall include at least one school administrator, and one mental health professional (e.g., psychological counselor, psychologist, psychiatric social worker). A School Police officer, if one is regularly assigned to the site, shall also be a member of the team. Composition of the full team will vary by school.
4. School crisis teams shall schedule regular meetings to update their knowledge of crisis intervention materials, procedures and techniques, as well as to improve, refine and upgrade their skills.



5. School crisis teams shall refer to the District's "Quick Reference Guide for Crisis Intervention" for background information and intervention strategies and shall update the Reference Guide when new information becomes available. Reference Guide materials may be duplicated and distributed to school staff, parents and community members, when necessary.
  6. As the effects of a crisis subside, the school site crisis team should assess its intervention strategies. Examples of topics to discuss are:
    - a. Actions that worked effectively and should be included in future plans.
    - b. Actions that did not work effectively and should not be included in future plans.
    - c. Actions that can be improved or modified.
    - d. Actions that might minimize or prevent another similar crisis.
- B. Local District Crisis Team
1. The Operations Coordinator in each Local District shall establish a Local District Crisis Team and is responsible for determining leadership and team member assignments.
  2. Local District crisis teams include personnel selected from secondary education, school support staff, School Counseling Services, Nursing Services, Psychological Services, School Mental Health Services, Pupil Services and Attendance, Medical Services and School Police.
  3. Responsibilities of Local District crisis teams include:
    - a. Providing crisis intervention training for school crisis teams in the Local District.
    - b. Providing the following services, as directed by the Local District Operations Coordinator:
      - 1) Assist principals/designees with needs assessment when a crisis occurs.



- 2) Provide support to the school crisis team by offering direct services to students and staff, as needed.
  - 3) Evaluate need for the use of appropriate community agency resources.
  - 4) Assess ongoing need for mental health services.
- c. Maintaining effective, ongoing communication among team members in order to better evaluate the ongoing needs of Local District schools.

**AUTHORITY:** This is a policy of the Chief Operating Officer.

**RELATED RESOURCES:** For additional information on relevant District policies, procedures and resources, the following offices may be contacted:

- District Crisis Counseling (Director) (213)241-2174
- School Mental Health  
(Psychiatric Social Worker, Clinical Psychologist or Psychiatric Nurse) (818) 997-2640
- Office of the Chief Operating Officer (213) 241-4133
- School Police Department (Chief) (213) 742-8222  
(Watch Commander) (213) 625-6631
- Office of Environmental Health and Safety (213) 241-3199  
(Safe School Plan)

**ASSISTANCE:** For assistance or further information please contact:

Marleen Wong, Director, Crisis Intervention Services, (213) 241-2174; Dan M. Isaacs, Chief Operating Officer, (213) 241-4133; or your Local District Operations Coordinator.