

TIPS
FOR USING THE
SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

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The true test of a good crisis response plan is that it becomes a regular way of doing business, not just a reaction to a recent event.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why Was This Rational/Tips Manual Written?	5
Why Was a Crisis Response Plan for Schools Developed?	6
Why Does My School Need a Comprehensive Crisis Response Plan?	7
Case Study – It Can Happen	8
Philosophy and Purpose of the School Crisis Response Plan and Tips Manual	10
Components of the School Crisis Response Plan	13
Tips for Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly	16
Tips for Staff Guidelines and Training Instructions	19
Tips for Site Crisis Response Team Yearly Duties	22
Tips for Site Crisis Response Team’s Duties during a Crisis at Their Site	24
Tips for the Instructions for Specific Types of Events	28
Main Office Response in a Multiple Site School District When Assisting another Site in the Organization	36
Appendixes	38

Appendixes A-G –**Tips and Rational for Additional Resources**

- Yearly Training/Drill Recommendations and Training Schedule (Appendix A)
- Drill and Simulation Ideas (Appendix A)
- Threat Assessment Process (Appendix B)
- Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome Referral Check List (Appendix C)
- Communication with the Media During a Crisis (Appendix D)
- Group Discussion Format Following a Death or Suicide (Appendix E)
- Go-Pack Suggested Contents (Appendix F)
- First Aid Kit Suggested Contents (Appendix G)

Appendixes H-K – Tips and Rationale for Copies of Forms for Duplication

- Duplicates of Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly (Appendix H)
 1. Crisis Team and Locations
 2. Location of Emergency Manuals and Supplies
 3. Community Emergency Telephone Numbers
- Duplicate of Staff Reference/Training Sheets (Appendix I)
 1. Staff Guidelines
 2. First Responder and Staff/Volunteer Instructions
 3. Quick Reference Guidelines
- Duplicates of Central Office Team Pages to Update Yearly (Appendix J)
 1. Administration Numbers and Calling Tree
 2. Main Office Response Team for a Crisis At Another Site
 3. Administrator’s Executive Assistant
- Duplicates of Incident Specific Forms (Appendix K)
 1. Bomb Threat Report Form
 2. Bomb Threat Evacuation Decision Considerations
 3. School Notification Script
 4. Communication Log Form
 5. Reunification Form

Conclusion 41

WHY WAS THIS TIPS MANUAL WRITTEN?

As I developed and revised the Crisis Response Plan, shared it with others and asked for feedback, I found that people had many questions. The first question was usually, “Why would we need such a comprehensive plan for our school? Another common question was, “Why are decisions made by a team at the site and not by the central office? However, the most frequent questions clustered around a few central themes. These themes included: 1) How is this Crisis Response Plan organized? 2) Why is it organized that way? 3) Why did you make certain suggestions such as raising a red flag during an evacuation?”

After I reviewed these questions, I realized that when I gave training presentations about crisis planning and about the crisis plan document, I had provided the answers to those questions in my presentation. After several years of presenting on the topic, I had refined the training to include answers to the most frequently asked questions. Providing access to this School Crisis Response Plan on-line would mean that schools could download and adapt the plan without receiving the information provided in the training presentations. Therefore, I decided to write this “Tips” document to provide the information that would answer the most frequently raised concerns and questions about the plan that had been covered or asked during the training sessions.

The on-line “School Crisis Response Plan” document provides schools with a template for things to consider or do before, during and after a crisis. The document also provides suggestions concerning “how” those things might be done. The Tips document, by comparison, explains “why” actions were suggested. The Tips document explains the logic and reasoning behind the suggestions provided in the Crisis Response Plan so that administrators and staff can determine whether to include items in their own plan. It is hoped that providing the explanation of why an action is suggested will help a school make thoughtful decisions as it adapts the plan or sections of the plan to serve and protect its students, staff, volunteers and the school. I hope that the Tips document will assist you as you review the plan, make your decision whether to use all or parts of it and/or adapt it to fit your school.

WHY THE CRISIS PLAN FOR SCHOOLS WAS DEVELOPED?

Incidents such as the bombing of the Muir Federal Building, shootings at Columbine and Newtown, 9-11, and hurricanes Katrina and Sandy focused significant public, media and government attention on crisis response planning. Government agencies such as Homeland Security, FEMA, state and regional emergency management coordinators, health departments and others have spent significant time and resources to create crisis plans for cities, counties, and states. Grants and other funding have been made available to local emergency government coordinators, to police and fire departments. Most traditional public elementary, middle and high schools throughout the country have also developed crisis response plans. Since Virginia Tech, colleges and universities have moved to develop and update crisis response plans. Finally, many large and small businesses and non-profit organizations have decided to develop crisis response plans for their facilities and clients.

School personnel understand that they need to create, maintain and regularly update comprehensive crisis response plans. Although schools have significant number of students, staff and volunteers at their facilities, they generally have limited finances and staff to devote to developing and updating their plan to meet new threats. Yet, the need of each school to have a comprehensive up to date plan is undeniable. It is this need that generated the revision of the basic crisis plan and this tips/training manual. Schools can use these documents to create or update their plan using any or all or sections of the plan and tips manual at no cost. They can adapt the plan or sections of the plan to meet their individual circumstances. The updated basic crisis response plan is available, free of charge, on-line at www.hollyhartconsulting.com under the "Resource" link. The document is on-line in the form of a word document so that all or any part of the plan can be downloaded easily and revised to fit an individual school. Schools are strongly advised to meet with their local police, fire and/or emergency government personnel to adapt the on-line crisis response plan or sections of it to fit their circumstances. Schools that choose to use all or parts of the plan or ideas from this explanatory document assume all liability for the download and/or use of the material.

WHY DOES MY SCHOOL NEED A CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN THAT IS THIS COMPREHENSIVE?

Many people ask, “Why do we need such a comprehensive crisis response plan?” A big catastrophic event is not going to happen here. Unfortunately, people at the Muir Federal Building probably felt the same way. People at Columbine and Newtown also probably thought that a major crisis would never happen at their school. It is human nature to believe that bad things won’t happen, or if they do, that they will happen in other places. Indeed, most of the time that rationale is true. Fortunately, a major crisis such as an active shooter incident is a rare event. For example, if you are a principal of a traditional public school in the United States, you are probably more likely to win the lottery than to be in charge of the site of school shooting. However, if you are the unlucky one to experience an active shooter, having a plan in place can save lives and help students, staff, and volunteers through a difficult time.

Another reason to develop a plan is that many of the events described in a comprehensive School Crisis Response Plan are events that you are likely to encounter. An event such as an injury of a student, staff person, or volunteer is one likely scenario. Someone becoming ill is another highly probable event. Preparation and planning to effectively handle these events is important to the people you serve and to the school that you represent.

A final reason to develop a plan is to ensure that if a crisis occurs, you and your school will have a say over the decisions that affect your school, students, staff and volunteers. If a crisis occurs and you do not have an acceptable plan in place, emergency government personnel will make the decisions for you. For example, if you have not selected a carefully thought out evacuation site, they will select a site and evacuate your people to it.

CASE STUDY IT CAN HAPPEN

Another way to explain the need for a crisis response plan is to tell a story, a true story. In the school district in which I worked, no one thought that there was a need for such a plan. However, a new superintendent arrived. He had experienced an incident in his former district that led him to believe that every school district needed to be prepared for a variety of possibilities. At the superintendent's request, a crisis response plan was developed by this author and a team of school personnel, firemen, police officers, and other emergency government professionals. Trainings were held for all staff in the district including teachers, aids, secretaries, cooks, and custodians.

Within weeks of the last training session, a call was received shortly after lunch at the main office. The call came in on the Friday prior to the Labor Day weekend. The caller stated that multiple bombs had been placed in several buildings throughout the district. The caller stated that the bombs would detonate shortly and that he was calling so that children would not be injured this time. The recent Muir Federal Building experience had heightened the level of concern for bomb threats throughout the country. After consultation with the police and fire departments and because of the wording of the message and age of the caller, and the recent bombing at the Muir Federal Building, the decision was made to evacuate all district buildings. The crisis response plan was implemented. The order was given to evacuate the twenty two buildings and ten thousand plus students and staff. The evacuation included elementary, middle and high schools, the main administration building and the maintenance building.

The school district Central Office Crisis Response Team assembled at their predetermined evacuation site, which was city hall. Immediately, police and fire personnel joined the district team at city hall. The school, police, and fire personnel worked as a team under the chief of police who was selected to serve as the incident commander.

All school buildings were notified and directed to move immediately to their evacuation sites. Each Site Crisis Response Team evacuated its building in accordance with its plan. Public notices went out to parents and the community announcing the evacuation and the closing of the schools. Buses were notified, but they were not available for two to two and a half hours because drivers could not be called in early. Crisis Response Site Teams managed students at the evacuation sites until a responsible adult arrived for a child or until busses which had been rerouted to the evacuation sites arrived at their normal pick up times. Staff remained until all students were gone, and the Site Team remained until all staff persons were on their way home. The Head of the Response Team at each site called the central command center to

notify the incident commander when all students and staff at their evacuation site were accounted for and released safely to an adult, to their normal bus or to their home. At the end of the day, all students and staff had been safely evacuated and returned to their families. The Central Office Crisis Response Team and police/fire incident command established a process for searching the buildings so that schools could reopen. The Central Office Team and Incident Command Team debriefed that afternoon and evening, and on the following Tuesday, when people returned from vacation, the Site Teams also were debriefed. Plans were reviewed and improved based on the evacuation experience.

After the bomb threat event at the school district, several other area facilities received threats. Since explosive devices were not found at the schools, evacuations were not conducted at most of those sites. Eventually, after several other threats and other illegal activities, the perpetrator was apprehended. However, he did not give up easily, but instead shot it out with the FBI and police who had tracked him down. He was found mentally incompetent to stand trial and was sent to a mental institution where, to my knowledge, he remains today.

No one at the school district thought that they would be involved in the largest school evacuation in the history of the state. Everyone was grateful that the superintendent had the foresight to insist that a plan be developed to ensure the safety of the students and staff.

Hopefully, you will never use your plan. However, if the need arises, spending the time up front to plan and to establish a relationship with the police, fire, health and other emergency government personnel will make all of the difference.

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN AND TIPS MANUAL

The on-line School Crisis Response Plan is designed to serve as a template for you to adapt to your local conditions or to take ideas from to improve your current plan. The plan is based on several assumptions. First, it is assumed that the police, fire, emergency government, health department and/or other government emergency personnel such as the FBI, FEMA, or ATF will deal with the actual incident whether the incident involves a fire, shooter, illness, quarantine, death, etc. All of these government agencies have preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery plans that have been carefully developed and tested through drill, practice and actual use. They are trained to handle the actual crisis. The School Crisis Response Plan and this Tips document do not address the functions of these government agencies. Instead, they address the preparation and response of the school so that it can assist its students, staff, volunteers, and visitors with the issues not normally taken care of by government emergency response personnel. These issues relate to the care and well being of the students, staff and volunteers at the school that are generally not part of the police, fire, etc, response. However, these school related issues are vital to ensuring the welfare of the school and its students, staff, volunteers and visitors.

The School Crisis Response Plan contains only a few **required actions/responses** for staff and/or members of the School's Site Crisis Response Team. In order to ensure the safety of students, all **staff members** are expected to:

- Attend crisis intervention training
- Review frequently the "Staff Guidelines"
- Have a list of the students in their care available at all times
- Call 911 when appropriate
- Notify the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team if an incident occurs
- Follow the direction of the Site Crisis Response Team and/or government agency incident commander

In order to ensure an appropriate response, the **Site Crisis Response Team Members** are expected to:

- Call 911 if it has not been done
- Handle matters related to the well being of students, staff, volunteers and visitors during a crisis
- Complete the Crisis Response Plan "Yearly Up-Date" pages, calling trees and floor plans

- Refresh the first aid kit as needed
- Update items in the Go-Pack each year and as needed
- Check that a copy of the school's Crisis Response Plan is available in three pre-determined locations at each school site and on line in a word searchable format
- Send a copy of the yearly updates to the central office if the organization has multiple sites
- Check that a copy of the school's Crisis Response Plan is at the home of the Head of each Site Team and of the school's central office administrator in case digital communication lines are down
- Provide a copy of the school's Crisis Response Plan to the police/fire central incident command or emergency government coordinator
- Hold yearly drills and training
- Complete appropriate reports and paperwork after an incident
- Remain calm, alert and professional during the crisis and participate in debriefing activities

All other aspects of the plan are suggestions to consider when responding to a crisis situation. The plan was developed based on the premise that the best decisions are made by personnel closest to the incident who know the people and circumstances. It is assumed that personnel closest to the incident can best assess events as they unfold and respond immediately to the situation before them. The specific situation may require skipping some suggested responses and/or adding others. The plan is designed to be implemented from the bottom up, not from the top down. It assumes that good people will make good professional decisions if given proper training and the authority to do what needs to be done.

The plan is designed to be revised to meet local needs and to be duplicated and assembled in a three ring binder. The following suggestions should be considered when assembling a plan. Pages should be run single sided, not back to back, so that pages can be torn out, handed to team members, copied and/or used as a reference document to ensure that important actions/considerations are not missed in the heat of the moment. In order to ensure ready access, the cover of the binder should be of brightly colored paper and should contain a copy of the title page of the Crisis Response Plan. The edge of the binder should be of a similar colored paper and should be labeled "CRISIS PLAN." The title page should be edited to include the name of the school district and the name of the specific site if the organization has multiple locations. The color used for the cover and binding of the plan should only be used for copies of the Crisis Response Plan so that the binder containing the plan can be easily located by any adult during a crisis. The eight sections of the plan should be divided with tabs for ease of use. The binders should be placed in three separate locations in three different parts of the school so that if an incident requires avoiding a section of the building, a copy of the plan will still be

accessible if digital access is not possible. One of the three copies should be in the Go-Pack ready to leave the building in the event of an evacuation. A copy of the plan should be offered to the local emergency government coordinator and/or the police/fire incident commander so that they have immediate access to the floor plans, locations of important items, and calling trees.

Finally, school personnel are encouraged to remember that a crisis response plan is like a fire extinguisher. Hopefully, it will never be used. In reality, most fire extinguishers are never used. However, when the need arises, it is crucial that it is in excellent working order and that people have the knowledge and training to use it properly.

COMPONENTS OF THE SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

The plan has several main components. After the introductory materials (section one), the sections are arranged in the order that they would be used. Sections two through six are designed to be used by the site/location of the crisis. They include: pages that should be updated at each site at the start of each year; pages to give to and review with all administrators, staff and volunteers at least once a year as part of the training process; instructions for the Site Crisis Response Team during an event at their site/location and instructions for handling specific types of incidents. The next section (section seven) contains instructions for the team at the main office of a multi site organization so that they can assist the site/location of the incident and keep other locations informed. Section seven is not used if the organization only has one site/location or if the incident occurs only at the main office location. If the incident is confined only to the district office building in a district with multiple sites, the district office team would use sections two through six of the response plan to manage the incident at their site. The last section, section eight, contains appendices that might be useful before, during or after an event. A list of the sections and their main contents is provided below for reference.

Section One - Introduction (Background)

- Letters of introduction
- The history and philosophy behind of the plan
- A list of the people who contributed to the plan

Section Two - Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly (Preparation)

- A list of site team members and key locations to be used during a crisis
- The location of manuals and supplies needed during a crisis
- A list of the telephone numbers of community agencies and businesses that may be of assistance during a crisis
- A telephone tree containing the numbers of all site administration and staff
- A list of telephone numbers of the main office administrators and the main office secretary
- Floor plans of the site/location

Section Three - Site Crisis Response Team Yearly Duties (Preparation)

- A list of duties to be completed at the start of each year by the top administrator at each site/location

- A list of duties to be completed at the start of each year by the lead secretary or receptionist at each site/location

Section Four - **Staff Guidelines and Training Sheets** (Preparation)

- Instructions for the three basic responses (Evacuate, Secure/Lock Down, Hold/Shelter in Place) expected of all administrators and staff during a crisis
- Instructions for the “First School Responder” at the scene of a crisis
- A “Quick Reference Sheet” to use when conducting yearly staff training and for staff to refer to during a crisis

Section six - **Duties of the Site Crisis Response Team during a Crisis at Their Site** (Response)

- Duties of the Head of the Team During a Crisis
- Duties of the Team during a crisis at their site/location
- Duties of the Team member in charge of students
- Duties of the Team member in charge of staff and volunteers
- Duties of the Team member in charge of visitors and family members during a crisis at their site/location
- Duties of the secretary, custodian/parking lot attendant, nurse and/or first aid trained responders and food service personnel during a crisis at their site/location

Section Six - **Instructions for Specific Events or Incidents** (Response)

- Incident Specific instructions to assist the Site Crisis Response Team and staff as they deal with a specific type of crisis at their location/site

Section Seven - **Duties of the Central Office of a Multiple Site Organization When Assisting the Site Crisis Response Team at another Site/Location** (Response)

- Telephone numbers of the main office administrators
- A telephone tree of the Main Office Crisis Response Team. (This team assists the Site Crisis Response Team members who are at the site/location of the crisis.)
- Yearly duties to be completed by the main office to be sure that all school sites/locations (including the main office) have a Team in place and that all yearly paperwork has been completed at each site/location
- A fill in the blank sheet to be used by the person at the main office taking the first call from the site/location of the crisis.
- Instructions for specific members of the Main Office Crisis Response Team so that they can assist the Team at the site/location of the incident and maintain the smooth function of the rest of the organization

- Instructions for the main office’s business manager during a crisis at another site/location
- Instructions for the administrative assistant or secretary of the chief administrator during a crisis at another site/location of the agency
- A script to use to communicate information to all sites/locations and/or to board members.
- A “Communication Log” form to ensure the accurate records are maintained of all calls and contacts

Appendices - Section Eight

- Appendices A-G include additional information not provided within the main sections of the School Crisis Response Plan. This information does not contain action steps but rather contains information that may be helpful during a crisis
- Appendices H-K contain easily accessible duplicates of forms which are filled out yearly or which could be useful to the School Site Team or Main Office Crisis Response Team during a crisis

SITE SPECIFIC PAGES/PAPERWORK TO UP-DATE YEARLY

The first section of the actual Crisis Response Plan appears after the introductory materials and is made up of a group of pages to be up-dated yearly at each individual site. These pages ensure rapid access to information needed during a crisis. The initial pages is composed of a list of **Site Crisis Response Team members** including their work, home and cell numbers and a list of the **key locations to be utilized during a crisis**. These lists are provided to provide immediate access to the information. If the school has limited personnel, one person may need to cover several functions on the Site Crisis Response Team. The team structure is designed so that if a member or members of the team are not present or are not available, the team members each move up one position and additional members are added. Team members and altertnates, therefore, must be familiar with the duties of the positions above them on the team list. Members of the team should be selected for their availability, knowledge, ability to remain calm during a crisis, ability to maintain confidentiality and capacity to work as a team. If possible, staff needed to assist students during the emergency will not be put on the team. If the school has a custodian, he/she would be included as an additional team member and be available to assist government emergency personnel if it becomes necessary to shut down electrical and other utilities or mechanical systems. If the school does not have a custodian, a member of the staff who is generally on site and available can be assigned to familiarize him/her with tasks such as how to shut off water, electricity, gas, heat, air circulation systems, etc.

The “Crisis Team and Locations” page also includes key building locations to be used during an emergency. Careful thought should be given to selecting these locations. Consider your potential needs for each function and select sites that best meet your needs. The alternate sites could be located in another location or another part of the building so that if the first locations are not available because they are part of the incident, the alternate locations can function nearly as well. Obviously, the location of the incident command center is critical as are the locations of the evacuation sites. Consider how you will limit access to the command center and evacuation sites. Separate locations for students and visitors/parents are provided to ensure that each group receives the most appropriate level of information and care. Secure approval from any facility that you plan to use as an evacuation site. If no suitable evacuation site is available, consider options such as requesting that the governmental agency’s incident commander secure city or school buses to serve as a temporary evacuation site.

Be sure that the telephone center location has sufficient landlines or cell capacity to handle your needs. Remember that cell phone lines are frequently overloaded during a crisis so try to

have at least one land line available. The government agency incident commander can convert this line to an unlisted number, if necessary, to ensure that communication is maintained. Also, establish an “OK” number for staff to call in and let the Crisis Response Team know they are alright when an area wide crisis occurs during non-school hours.

The next section to be updated yearly is the “**Location of Emergency Manuals and Supplies**” page. Be sure to keep MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) binders up to date and place them next to the Crisis Response Plan binder in the custodian’s office or administrator’s office. MSDS binders should also have a distinctive label so that they are easily accessible to the Site Crisis Response Team and emergency personnel from responding government agencies. An on line list of materials requiring MSDS sheets should also be maintained as an alternate source of information.

The list of **Community Emergency Telephone Numbers** should be kept up to date and reviewed at least yearly. Check with your 911 call center to determine if there is a delay in ring and pick up time. Some areas have a 5-10 second delay time between dialing the last digit and the caller hearing the first ring. The 911 operator hears the ring, but there can be a delay in the caller hearing the ring. If this is true in your area, be sure to train all administrators, staff and volunteers to wait at least 15 seconds to hear the ring. (Suggest that they count “one thousand one, one thousand two,” etc.) If they hang up and continue to dial again and again, they will not get through. If it is necessary to dial a number to secure an outside line (such as dialing an “8” or a “9”), be sure that all administrators, staff and volunteers are trained to do so and include that instruction on telephones and on the cover of the Crisis Response Plan binder.

The **School Administration Numbers** page is provided to ensure rapid notification of the appropriate school personnel. The list of school administrators and their home and cell phone numbers should be kept up to date. Calling trees and/or automated calling programs should be developed at each school site and at the central office if the school district has multiple sites. The calling trees should include all administrators, staff and volunteers so that you can rapidly communicate important information after normal work hours. Calling trees may take up several pages in the manual and should be maintained even if automated capabilities exist under normal circumstances. Automated capabilities may be down during a large disaster. Separate telephone trees and automated calling lists are generally appropriate for administrators, staff and for volunteers so that you can choose whether to activate one or all of the trees. Each person in the calling tree should have no more than three or four numbers to call to ensure the speedy contact of all persons if calls must be made manually and a caller cannot reach a person on their section of the tree. Under such circumstances, the first caller would make his/her own calls and also make the calls that the person who could not be contacted would have made. A code word should be selected and be used to verify that the

call is legitimate especially when notifying of a school cancelation or a death. The code word should have some meaning for all administrators and staff so that it can easily be remembered.

Floor Plans should be updated as appropriate and should include the locations of electrical panels, air handling shut down switches, fire extinguishers, chemical storage areas, equipment maintenance tunnels, evacuation routes, tornado shelters, and any other information which would be of assistance to government emergency personnel during a crisis. Evacuation routes should be posted in each room of the school.

Copies of all pages of this site specific section of the Crisis Response Plan should be **provided to the central office** of the organization **and** to the fire/police **incident command** and/or emergency government coordinator to ensure rapid response.

STAFF GUIDELINES AND FIRST SCHOOL RESPONDER–STAFF TRAINING/INSTRUCTIONS

These pages are designed to be copied, given to and reviewed with all staff on at a minimum a yearly basis. It is suggested that the pages be run on card stock of the same color as the cover and binding of the School Crisis Response Plan so staff can easily locate them. These pages contain the responsibilities of staff who are not serving as members of the Site Crisis Response Team. All staff are responsible for: frequently reviewing the information on these pages, having these pages readily accessible during a crisis and having a list of students and volunteers specifically in their charge with them at all times (for example on a field trip or at an activity they supervise.)

The **Staff Guidelines** with the Evacuate, Secure (Lock Down), and Hold (Shelter in Place) directives constitute the three standard crisis responses required of staff, volunteers and students. When any one of these directives is given, the reason for the directive should be clearly stated. Straight forward instructions/explanations are recommended instead of code words or made up scenarios. Codes and made up scenarios usually cause confusion. If you choose not to state the facts, staff and students may not take the situation seriously. In addition, students are usually smart enough to understand the code or story and figure out what is really happening. All staff should be frequently reminded that any communications over two way communication devices may be intercepted and could appear in the media.

EVACUATE

The evacuate directive is given in the event of a fire, hazardous material spill, bomb threat or another situation which would make removal of the students and staff to an alternate site in or outside of the building the safest option. Evacuations always entail some risk of injury so they should be practiced, and they should only be implemented when necessary. Use the “Evacuation Decision Considerations” guide to assist you as you make your decision of whether or not to evacuate. Be sure to provide adequate instruction so that you do not to evacuate people through the site of the fire, hazardous spill, etc. and so that staff and students know whether to assemble at on onsite, outdoor or off campus location. Block off unsafe areas and/or redirect staff and students around those areas.

Evacuations of two types should be planned. The first type would direct each class to report to a specific spot outside of the building. The second type would direct staff and students to the

off campus location. The off site locations should be listed on the Crisis Team and Locations page found previously in this manual. Using a predetermined off site location allows other school personnel, family members of students and staff to know where to locate you and ensures a safe, carefully thought out evacuation.

The directions on the Staff Guideline page of the manual should be followed. Exiting immediately using the nearest safe exit is called for in an evacuation. Staff, volunteers and students can take things within reach, but they should not spend any time gathering belongings or going to another location to retrieve belongings. They should “grab and go.” They should not try to retrieve items or coats unless they are within easy reach no matter what the item is or what the weather conditions are. Evacuate means exit immediately.

It is suggested that lights be turned out when a room is evacuated in order to let fire fighters and other emergency personnel know that the room is, to the best of the staff member’s knowledge, “cleared.” Ask staff to follow the last person out, instead of leading the group, to decrease the possibility that someone (especially a young or frightened student) might panic, hide or be left behind.

A red evacuation “flag” can be used to warn people not to enter/reenter the facility. The red evacuation flag should be placed below the United States’ flag and your state flag out of respect for those symbols or tied to the front door handle.

Setting up a reunification/student check out procedure ensures that young students are safely in the hands of parents or appropriate adults and that all students regardless of age are with supportive family and/or friends to help them deal with the situation they have just experienced.

SECURE (Lock Down)

The **secure** (Lock Down) directive is most frequently given when a violent or potentially violent intruder is on site. The main concern in this type of situation is to remain safe and to escape if you know the location of the perpetrator(s) and if it is feasible to do so.

It is important for staff to remain calm and set an example for students during a secure/lockdown. It is also important to remain as quiet as possible so a perpetrator does not follow the sound of voices coming from the room. Therefore, asking students not to use electronic devices is suggested to maintain silence, keep lines open, prevent panic and reduce the potential of false information and further upsetting the students in your care. However, judgment must be used on this item based on the situation.

Blockading the door with whatever is available is suggested to prevent or slow entry by the perpetrator. Hiding in a closet, cabinet or under furniture could also be considered. Pulling shades and keeping everyone away from doors, windows and other areas where shots could enter is another potential strategy. Finally, during a secure/lock down situation, it is recommended that no one be released (even to the bathroom) to ensure everyone's safety and to reduce the potential of the intruder gaining access to the room.

HOLD (Shelter in Place)

A **hold/shelter in place** is used in situations which require staff or government emergency personnel to quickly complete tasks and to limit movement of students, volunteers and/or staff. Movement of students, volunteers or staff could impede the efficiency of the responders or could put students or staff in physical or emotional danger. An example of this type of situation would be holding students and/or staff in place so that EMTs can treat a heart attack or traffic accident victim. The hold would be instituted until the EMT's had completed their work and transported the victim and the area had been cleaned or cleared. Another time a hold might be used would be when you need to provide information to students and staff about an incident before the students move to another area of the facility or leave for the day. In this situation, the hold would allow you to provide accurate information and allow time for questions.

SITE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM YEARLY DUTIES

This section of the plan is composed of two parts: 1) lists of duties which should be completed at least once a year and which are needed to keep the plan current and 2) general duties of specific Site Crisis Response Team members during a crisis. The **Yearly Duties of the Site Administrator** page is self explanatory. However, a leader leads by example. Therefore, it is critical that the site administrator complete the listed tasks in a timely manner and, by doing so, model the importance of the plan to all staff and volunteers. Timely completion of these tasks also ensures that the site is ready for an emergency. The Head of the Site Crisis Response Team should be sure that that planning activities include specific plans for all students, volunteers and staff with disabilities, ELL concerns and specific serious health concerns. Accommodation of these three groups should be considered in all aspects of planning. For example, how will a wheel chair bound student exit if the elevator cannot be used? What process will ensure that appropriate adults pick up ELL students at a reunification site? What medications or health information for specific students, staff or volunteers is needed during a crisis?

Similarly, the tasks on the **Yearly Duties–Secretary** page must be completed in a timely fashion for a successful implementation of the plan. The Go-Pack is an essential component of the plan. The Go-Pack can most easily be housed in a roll out box or cart with a handle. (These boxes/carts are available at most home improvement or office supply stores.) The Go-Pack should be stored at the desk of a secretary or receptionist who is generally present during school hours and who is near a main exit. The Go-Pack should be visible so that anyone could grab it on the way out of the door in the event of an evacuation or during a move to an evacuation site or command center. The contents of the Go-Pack can be altered to fit the needs of the school and its students or the district office.

The red evacuation flag is simply a strip of red material that can be raised on a flag pole or placed on the handle of the main door to indicate to staff and students that it is not safe to enter/reenter the building during a bomb threat. (The red flag should never be raised above the United States or state flag.)

Student rosters, contact information and health release of information forms should be kept in a plastic bag or box in the Go-Pack so that they cannot be damaged by water. Health information release forms are an essential item in the Go-Pack. Hospitals are not allowed to release information to the school about students, staff or volunteers unless these forms have been completed and are sent or faxed to the health care provider. If multiple injuries occur, victims may be taken to multiple medical facilities. Health release of information forms will be

needed for the school personnel to determine which facility has received each person so that school personnel can help family members locate their loved ones.

Staff and volunteers should be given the option of placing a medical release form, and information related to medications, and medical conditions, etc. in a sealed envelope. These envelopes should be maintained alphabetically in a water proof package in the Go-Pack. The sealed envelopes can be given to EMTs prior to transport. This process allows confidentiality while ensuring appropriate treatment.

If students or staff have conditions that are life threatening if they do not have their medications, plans should be developed to ensure that these medications are taken out during an evacuation. (An example of a needed medication would be an epinephrine (EPI) pen.)

The ten packs of life savers are included in the Go-Pack to ensure that diabetic students or staff could manage for a short period of time by ingesting the life savers.

SITE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM DUTIES DURING A CRISIS AT THEIR SITE

The next section of the plan lists **team and individual team member's duties during an actual crisis** at their site. Each position on the team as listed on the Crisis Team and Location page has specific duties to perform during and after any type of crisis. The **Head of the Response Team** sets the pace for the response. How he/she responds determines the confidence that students, staff and volunteers have in the way the situation is handled.

The duties of the Head of the Site Team include the suggestion that confidential school and student records be locked up immediately at the beginning of a crisis. This action is suggested to limit access to important records during the crisis to designated members of the crisis response team. The suggestion is included because some chaos usually accompanies a crisis. Well intentioned staff or volunteers may access and remove records and, then, all of the necessary records might not be available to the team when needed. Also, confidentiality and the potential loss of records during the crisis are important reasons to immediately secure vital records.

Appointing a key person to serve as liaison to the government agency incident commander and to be at his/her disposal is critical. Helping the incident commander end the crisis while keeping students and staff safe are the first duties of the team. **Understanding that the fire, police or other government incident commander is in charge of and is ultimately responsible for handling the crisis event** is a fundamental rule of any crisis response. This is no time for turf wars. They are trained. This is their job. Help them do it. Good communication between the incident commander and school personnel is vital.

It is suggested that you do not leave an injured student or staff person until a family member has arrived. Injured people need advocates and support. If **students or staff members are transported to the hospital** from your site, send one adult with the person in the ambulance for support if that is allowed. Have another adult follow in a separate car. The second staff person follows the ambulance in a separate vehicle so that both staff members have transportation back to the school and/or their vehicles after a family member of the injured party arrives at the hospital. Maintain a presence at the hospital until a family member or support person is with the patient and the family member feels he/she is able to deal with the situation.

When the **transport of multiple injured persons** to the hospital occurs, tape the name of each person on their clothing to help hospital personnel identify each victim. Also, send the health

information from the Go-Pack with each transported person, if possible. If it is not possible to do so, fax or deliver that information to the hospital as soon as it can be secured.

Experience suggests that it is best to establish the **media communication** site away from the incident and away from affected students and staff. It is the media's job to get the story. It is the job of the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team and the Crisis Response Team members to assist with handling the crisis and to protect the students and staff of the school. Select one spokesperson (usually the school's administrator or Head of the Site Crisis Response Team) to communicate with the media. Clarify with the government agency incident commander who will speak about what and when announcements will be made. It is important to review the media guidelines presented later in this plan or from other sources prior to and during a crisis.

All staff directly involved in an incident prepare a **written report** containing their understanding of what occurred as soon as practical and give it to the Head of the Site Team. It is best if reports are written before people talk to each other so that their memory of the event will not be altered by the comments of others. School accident report and insurance forms should be completed in a timely manner and sent to the appropriate personnel.

Debriefing of the Site Crisis Response Team is suggested in order to review events and help members of the team deal with the situation and their emotions surrounding it. If the incident is significant, it is recommended that a trained facilitator who was not involved directly in the incident lead the debriefing. Consider inviting the personnel of the government agencies who handled the crisis to attend one or more of the debriefing sessions. They may have information or insights to add. Since they may also need to talk through the events, they would not facilitate the meeting. During the debriefing, persons who need support and or counseling can be identified and connected to the appropriate community resource(s). Finally, use the debriefing process to make a list of things that would improve the plan and revise the plan accordingly.

Communication through the media, telephone banks, letters, emails, web sites, social media, text messaging, etc. are methods of ensuring that students, volunteers, staff, affected families, and the community receive accurate and up to date information. Such communications are also an important means of controlling rumors. Remember, all such communications will be subject to open records laws.

Detailed plans should be developed for the **first day/time the school is open after the crisis**. Determine if additional staff/volunteers are needed to support students and/or staff. Be prepared to handle additional and unexpected issues. Consider hiring additional clerical support and/or floating substitutes. Meet with staff prior to opening, provide information to

them, answer their questions, and provide training on how they will handle students. Also use this meeting to assess the needs of returning staff members.

Consider meeting with students at the start of the day to discuss the situation and their feelings/concerns. If meetings are held with students, consider holding these meetings in small manageable groups in order to provide the needed support and in order to keep emotions from escalating. If multiple staff will be used to lead these discussions, provide information and training for them prior to the meetings.

Establish a process for identifying students, volunteers and staff who are struggling and a referral process to offer them assistance. All of these actions are designed to assist people as they try to handle the situation and will help the school return to normal more quickly.

The next part of this section covers specific **duties of the Site Crisis Response Team members**. These pages can be torn out and used by team members as a reminder of actions to consider or handed to an available person if the original team member is not available. Insuring the immediate safety of students, volunteers and staff and the safe delivery of the students to appropriate adults/family is of primary importance. These two factors will be the primary measures of whether or not the implementation of the Crisis Response Plan is considered successful.

The **Supervisor of Students** is charged with ensuring the safety of and on-going support of students. Students are removed from the Incident Command Center, the Site Response/Communication Center and the telephone bank area so that these locations can operate efficiently. Students are also removed from these areas to limit as much as possible the emotional impact of the incident on them. The Supervisor of students establishes and oversees reunification sites and student counseling centers separate from those reestablished for staff and family members to ensure appropriate care.

The **Supervisor of Staff/Volunteers** ensures that staff and volunteers are cared for and also do not become too helpful by taking over where assigned staff can and should be carrying out a function to ensure best practice and to limit liability. This supervisor also sets up the communication center, oversees incoming communication, establishes a telephone bank, attempts to verify incoming communication, passes important incoming communication to the incident command center, and oversees support for the staff and volunteers during and after the crisis. This support includes the establishment of a separate counseling center for staff manned by non-school personnel to ensure privacy.

The **Supervisor of Visitors and Families** provides for the immediate safety of visitors and arranges for support for visitors and family members during and after the crisis. This supervisor sets up the family/visitor area and maintains it during and after the crisis. In

addition, this supervisor organizes and distributes information on services available to families and visitors in the community.

The role of the **Secretary** is to directly support the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team. The secretary ensures that the “Go Pack” is where it is needed and that the Head to the Team has access to needed information and documents from the Crisis Plan, “Go Pack” and other sources.

The functions of the **Custodian/Parking Lot Attendants, Nurse/Certified First Aid Responder**, are spelled out in the plan. The lead custodian or person familiar with mechanical and electrical systems, etc. can assist the government agency incident commander as needed.

When the members of the Site Crisis Response Team have finished their duties as listed in the crisis response plan document, they report back to the incident command center and assist as directed by the incident commander and/or Head of the Site Crisis Response Team.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF INCIDENTS

Each item in this section provides special considerations for the type of crisis or incident listed. These pages are intended to be used in addition to the team pages previously described which are used for any type of crisis. The definition of “crisis” used to determine what to include in this section was broad and included anything that might put the students, volunteers and/or staff in physical or emotional danger or that could disrupt the smooth functioning of the school. Additions will be made to this section over time as schools that use the plan send suggestions for additions and/or improvements. The following paragraphs discuss issues related to some potential types of incidents.

The pages related to **Abuse-Neglect-Sexual Assault of a Child** are specific to Wisconsin law. If your school is in Wisconsin, it will be necessary to update this section as new legislation is passed. If your school is located in another state, it will be necessary to review the law(s) of your state to determine your legal responsibilities. Regardless of where your school is located, you can fill in the blanks for the Department of Human Services’ telephone numbers. Your school’s governance board can set policies which meet the requirements of your state’s law. The crucial decision is to determine if your school’s policy will require employees to report if your state law does not list those specific employees as mandatory reporters. You should also determine the age of consent/adulthood in your state to determine your right to report issues related to adults. Confidentiality issues may apply to reports of abuse/assault of an adult. Adults (including 18 year old and older students) generally have the right to report or to refuse to report abuse and/or assault if they are mentally competent.

Bomb threats involve many considerations. The “Bomb Threat Report” form is designed to be placed at each main incoming telephone line. If a bomb threat is received, the person receiving the threat should try to fill the form out immediately. It is best if it is filled out prior to talking to others so that his/her memories are not altered by the comments of others.

Cell phones and other electronic devices are not used during a bomb threat because some detonators can be set off by a cell phone signal. The “Evacuation Decision Considerations” pages are designed to help make a quick but thoughtful evacuation decision when the police department, fire department or other government agency cannot or does not make the decision for you.

“Search Instructions” are provided to assist you if governmental agency personnel are unable to conduct the search. The level of search will be determined by the level of threat. Obviously, if a bomb is found, government personnel will determine the level of the search and conduct the

search. In a low level threat situation, (for example, a bomb threat call obviously made by a young child) you may choose to conduct a low level search. Staff are not required to assist in a search. The decision to participate should be voluntary. Requiring people to assist would not achieve the desired result and could involve liability and/or union issues. Decisions related to whether or not to send staff, volunteers and/or students home and/or close the school are made by the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team in collaboration with the district administrator.

Bus accidents can range from fender benders to incidents involving multiple deaths. This section was developed with input from schools which have experienced both types of incident. The degree of harm to passengers will determine which parts of the response you choose to implement and which other parts of your crisis response plan you will need to consult and implement. For example, you may need to refer to the Serious Injury or Death section or Media section of your plan.

When dealing with a possible **food borne illness**, the utensils, food, and garbage are secured so that the health department can conduct tests to determine the cause of the outbreak. The tests may indicate that the outbreak was not related to the food served at the school, or the tests may pin point the cause and prevent a similar outbreak.

During a **hazardous material spill**, your first concern is to prevent or minimize the damage to students, volunteers and staff. Shutting down air handling systems can prevent the spread of fumes. Whether or not to pull the fire alarm should be determined by whether the regular evacuation routes would take some people through the spill site, by the type of spill, and by the toxicity of the spill.

The key to dealing with a **hostage situation** is to remain calm and not to engage in a power struggle. Dealing with a hostage taker is often similar to dealing with a distraught/out of control student or adult, but the stakes are higher. Situations of this type almost always include a need of the perpetrator for power and control. Your body language, words, tone of voice and volume are all important factors that can escalate or deescalate the situation. The following suggestions are generally effective. Listen and try to respond to the person with empathy. Talk softly. Stay out of the person's physical space. Lean or step back while talking rather than moving toward the person. These actions will communicate to the person that you are not challenging their power. Try to convince the person to release some or all of the hostages.

Follow the directions of government agency personnel during and after a hostage situation. They are trained to handle situations of this type. Help parents, family members and others understand that revealing or publishing information may jeopardize the safety of the hostages or jeopardize future legal proceedings. Work with government responders to determine what

information should be released and when it should be released. Fear and feelings of things being out of control are normal responses during and after this type of situation. Using all available lines of communication after the incident is resolved to provide approved information to concerned parties and to the public will help dispel their fears.

Issues related to **infectious diseases** require assistance from the Health Department. Establish a good relationship with them prior to a situation. Follow their instructions. They are the experts. In most states, they have the authority to close a school under specific circumstances. Use other sections of the plan such as how to relate to the media as appropriate. In this type of situation, over communication with students, parents/guardians, volunteers and staff is preferable to insufficient communication. Rumor control strategies, a dedicated phone line and communication on the school's web site or social media page should all be beneficial.

Injury or illnesses are probably the most frequently encountered issues. Whenever in doubt, call 911. When calling for assistance, provide specific and detailed directions to the 911 dispatcher so that the ambulance can come to the correct location/entrance. Having numbered external and internal doors can cut down response time. Accurate communication can save crucial time. Sending someone outside to greet the ambulance and direct emergency personnel to the victim(s) can help secure assistance more quickly. If a student, volunteer or staff person is transported by ambulance, have two staff accompany him/her to the hospital. One person can ride in the ambulance, if allowed, and the other person can follow in another vehicle. (The second vehicle provides transportation back to the school for both staff members.) Staff should remain with the student, volunteer or staff person until a family member or another responsible person arrives and is emotionally capable of supporting the patient. Do not leave an injured or seriously ill person (student, staff member or volunteer) alone at a medical facility. Wait until adequate support arrives. Putting a name/label on each injured person is suggested to assist hospital staff and allow them to more quickly provide appropriate treatment.

Issues of safety and liability must be considered related to transporting a sick or injured student or staff member. Transporting a sick or injured student or staff person in a school or personal vehicle should only be done in extreme circumstances if an ambulance cannot reach the site. Transporting in a school or personnel vehicle is not advised because it is impossible to know the extent of a person's injuries or other health concerns both of which could become an issue during transport. Except in extreme instances, people should be transported by an ambulance. If a parent/guardian of a student or a friend of an adult staff member is present, and prefers to be transport them, a judgment call is required. (Ask yourself, "Is the injured person or parent capable of making a rational decision related to transport based on his/her physical condition or age? "What is our liability if you allow them to transport the person?)

In the case of **severe injury or death** of a student, volunteer or staff person which occurs on the school's site or at a school activity, follow the instructions for "Injury or Illness" presented in the School Crisis Response Plan. The first thing that needs to be done in the event of injury or illness is to attempt to secure appropriate treatment for the person. After medical care or confirmation of death has occurred, follow the instructions in the Severe Injury or Death section of the Crisis Response Plan. For severe injuries or deaths that do not occur on-site, begin with the Severe Injury or Death section of the Crisis Response Plan. Good judgment, quality leadership, teamwork, and the utilization of area professionals will help guide the team through this difficult type of crisis.

Sharing information with staff, volunteers, students, their families and/or the community is important. However, maintaining confidentiality is also important and failure to do so may have legal consequences. An appropriate balance between confidentiality and sharing information is a juggling act. Confidentiality is important to the persons involved and to the reputation of the school. Verification of information is a vital element of this part of the plan. Accuracy must be established and double checked. Misinformation can cause emotional distress and complicate potential future legal proceedings. Take into consideration the feeling of family members as to what information to release. However, giving family members veto power over what items to release is rarely good practice. It is also important to consider the impact of information on the school, students, staff and volunteers. The recommendation to establish both a primary and alternate family contact is made to increase the probability of reaching an appropriate person to confirm information, to agree to the release of information or to notify the family of information about to be released.

Situations of this type require strong and competent leadership. People need to feel that someone is in charge and that the situation is under control. Emotions usually run high. It can be tempting for the team and its leader to give over school decisions to family members or other agencies. It is recommended that the school stay in charge of school decisions to provide the maximum support and leadership to students; volunteers; staff; the affected family; families of other students and the community. When possible, meet the impacted family at their home or another non-school site. The family needs to grieve and go through the stages of grieving. These needs are usually best met off site so that they do not intensify the emotions of other students, staff and/or volunteers. In many cases, visitation and memorial services can be held at a site other than the school.

The crisis response plan suggests writing out all announcements to the press and staff so that they are accurate and carefully thought out. Writing out communication also provides documentation, ensures that wording is sensitive to the feelings of all concerned and ensures that potential legal proceedings are not compromised.

Meeting with staff before students arrive is suggested when it is possible to do so. The purpose of this meeting is to provide accurate information, dispel rumors, provide the staff with strategies for talking with students about the event, and provide a safe place for staff to deal with their concerns and emotions. A Site Crisis Response Team member can monitor staff responses and actions during the meeting to determine if any staff members are in need of additional support or if they are unable to work with students while they deal with their own response to the incident. If a meeting with staff cannot be held prior to the arrival of students, consider training Site Crisis Response Team members and have them meet with small groups of staff, volunteers and students at the start of the day to share information and to determine the impact of the event on those individuals.

The plan suggests continuing a normal day and schedule as soon as practical because structure and familiar patterns usually help people cope with stressful situations. Again, this is a judgment call. You know your staff and students. You know the community. Making this decision as a team will provide various points of view and additional information for consideration. If the team cannot agree, the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team can make the decision, preferably in conjunction with the district administrator. Once the decision is made, it is important that the members of the team speak with one voice.

More staff meetings to handle questions and dispel rumors are usually preferable to less. Smaller groups are usually preferable to large groups because emotions are less likely to get out of control and “group think” is not likely to occur.

Staff, volunteers, students and/or the family of the deceased may request that you lower the flag to half mast. Since only the governor of the state or the president can approve lowering the flag, it is not appropriate to lower it. Veteran’s groups may complain publically if you lower the flag to half mast without a decree from the governor or president.

Monitoring of students, volunteers and staff to determine if additional support is necessary is often a primary need after such an event. This monitoring includes monitoring of the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team and team members as well as the District Crisis Response Team members. They will be taking the brunt of the situation. They often will ignore their own needs while concentrating on the needs of others.

Bringing in outside counseling personnel is generally useful. Outside professionals are removed from the situation and often do not know the parties involved in the incident. Therefore, they can have a more objective point of view. It is especially important that outside counselors work with staff to ensure confidentiality.

Inviting a medical person to attend staff, volunteer, student and/or community meetings and to answer questions can help many people reach a point of acceptance and answer lingering questions. Hearing from an outside expert is often helpful.

Removing the name of a deceased person from all mailing, email, transportation and other lists is very important. It is very difficult for the family if they continue to receive routine school correspondence addressed to the deceased or to his/her parents or guardian days, weeks, or months after the death. Reviewing this issue regularly during the first year after the incident can catch any lists that were missed initially.

Asking two staff to secure or handle any personal items of the injured or deceased person ensures that all items are secured and turned over to the family. It also ensures that the school will not be held responsible for anything that is believed to be missing.

Sensitively removing/retiring objects that remind staff and students of the loss (such as memorials, personal items, etc) is important. Handling this issue, like many other aspects of responding to a crisis, is a balancing act. Some people may be less ready to move on than others. Yet, the longer things remain in place, the more difficult it is to eventually remove them. Work as a team to make these decisions. Secure outside professional advice if necessary.

Be sensitive to religious, cultural and ethnic traditions and to appropriate etiquette related to death, visitation procedures and the funeral. Provide information on these topics to students, volunteers and staff, if appropriate. If you believe that students, volunteers and/or staff may need support at the visitation or funeral, consider developing a schedule of volunteers who will be able to support others at these functions. Secure non-agency professionals if necessary.

Debriefing the Site Crisis Response Team after this type of incident is important for several reasons. First, it allows the team to determine how members of the team are doing. Second, it allows the team to work through the situation as a team and talk with other people who shared the same experiences related to the incident. Third, it allows the team to plan for the long term support of some staff, volunteers and students. Finally, it allows the team to make suggestions for improving the plan and process in case a similar event occurs in the future.

One week, one month, one year, five year, etc. anniversaries of the event may cause additional concerns, responses and/or press coverage. The team can plan for these anniversaries by convening the Site Crisis Response Team in advance of these anniversaries to develop a plan to reduce the impact and provide needed support. Events might be considered to help mark the anniversary in an appropriate and supportive manner. Anniversaries are usually a concern until students and staff who experienced the event are no longer at the school and/or until sufficient time has passed.

The “Stages of Grief” chart and the “Developmental Understanding of Death” chart are provided to give information to the Site Crisis Response Team and staff. Additional resources can be secured from professionals in your area. A bibliography of appropriate readings may be helpful to some staff, and students. Reading about similar situations and writing or journaling about the experience can be therapeutic for some people.

Dealing with an **intruder**, especially if he or she is armed, is one of the most difficult situations a school can encounter. In many ways, the response is similar to that of a hostage situation. The first few minutes tell whether the intruder plans to do damage or can be reasoned with. If the person is willing to talk, your chances for a positive outcome are increased. Engaging in a power struggle is likely to result in a negative outcome.

One initial decision is whether to institute a Hold (Shelter in Place), Secure (Lock Down) or Evacuate. If you can talk the person out of the building, you can lock the exit so he/she cannot reenter. Then, you can institute a Secure/Lock Down and take steps to protect anyone else who is outside of the building. A decision by individuals whether to run or Secure/Lock Down is made based on the circumstances and the knowledge available.

Pre-planning to ensure that all external and internal doors can be locked from the inside is a key preparation for this type of situation. Locking down any way that helps to isolate the intruder and provides greater protection to students, staff and volunteers can reduce casualties.

Incidents involving letters and packages potentially containing such things as anthrax or bombs prompted the inclusion of the **Mail/Package Security** section of the plan. Preplanning and continued vigilance are key to this section of the plan. The suggestions under “Reasons to be Suspicious” should be implemented and continued on a regular basis –not just when an incident has occurred at the local, state or national level. People who regularly deal with mail can be trained. Utilizing mail security measures should be a regular way of doing business.

Protests/Demonstrations and Sit-Ins present unique problems for any school. The suggestions in this plan are designed to ensure that the protesters are heard and that the safety, reputation of the students, staff and school are maintained and that minimal disruption to the educational process occurs. Assessing the make-up of the protesting group can help the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team develop a plan for dealing with the situation. Waiting to deal with the situation until the entire Site Crisis Response Team can assemble is rarely advisable. Someone usually needs to take charge immediately. If the protesters are on public property, the police may be limited in the assistance that they can provide. Constitutionally guaranteed rights to free speech come into play if the protesters are on public property. Managing press coverage is a concern. Refer to the “Communicating with the Media” section in Appendix A. This is also an instance where the communication/media area should be set up a distance from the incident.

You can listen to the concerns of the protesters and when possible, limit the audience of the protesters. You can also avoid making promises that you cannot or do not want to keep just to end the situation. A key to handling this type of situation is to evaluate and constantly reevaluate the situation and then to respond accordingly.

Suggestions related to the **Reunification/Release of a Student** are designed to ensure that all students are physically released after the event to an appropriate and safe person who will provide the support they need. Advance preparation and information that is updated frequently are essential to success in this area.

The **suicide** section of the plan is designed to help a staff person assess the level of threat and respond accordingly. The plan assumes that staff members are not a professional therapists or psychiatrists. This section is designed to assist school staff so that they can help secure appropriate professional assistance in the community for the person in need. Having two people do the assessment and working as a team are suggested to ensure maximum help for the person and to limit liability. If a death does occur, refer to the section “Injury-Serious or Death” of the School Crisis Response Plan.

Responding to a **tornado or severe weather** incident is another section that depends heavily on pre-planning. You can secure and use a weather alert radio or have a weather alert notification set up on the computer or cell phone of the secretary or receptionist whose desk is covered throughout the school day. Locating the best areas for shelter and evacuation sites ahead of time ensures a better outcome if an event occurs. Practicing on your state’s Tornado Awareness Day or at another time, if your state does not have an awareness day, is recommended. Common sense suggests that you assess the impact of the incident on the larger community before releasing students and when making plans to support students and staff.

The logic of the individual events sections of the School Crisis Response Plan that were not discussed in this document were considered so clear cut that it was felt that explanations were not necessary.

RESPONSE OF THE MAIN OFFICE OF A MULTIPLE SITE ORGANIZATION TO A CRISIS AT ANOTHER SITE IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

If a crisis is located at the main office, the main office should activate their Site Crisis Response Team and the sections of the plan entitled Building Response, Crisis Team Duties - Individual Site and Instructions for Specific Events that preceded this section in the School Crisis Response Plan. During a crisis that impacts only their own location, the main office Site Crisis Response Team functions like any other site with a crisis at their location.

If the crisis is at a location other than the main office, the main office team would use this section of the Crisis Response Plan. This section of the plan is designed so that the main office can assist the Site Crisis Response Team that has the crisis event at its location and so that the main office can provide information and support to school sites not involved in the crisis. Therefore, each year, the main office creates two sets of paper work, one to handle a crisis at their own site and one to assist another site in the district that has a crisis. If the school district has only one site, then, this section of the crisis response plan is not needed. Finally, the team from the main office used to assist a Site Crisis Response Team at another site may differ from the main office's own Site Crisis Response Team that would handle a crisis if it was at their location. If both another site and the main office site are impacted, two teams and processes may need to function simultaneously.

The Main Office District Crisis Response Team is also responsible for ensuring that all other school sites have their plans up dated and in place each year and that each site has sent copies of its plan to the main office. The Main Office First Staff Responder section is designed to help the first staff responder at the main office secure adequate information so that the main office can assist the other site, handle the media and notify other locations that are not directly involved in the crisis. Main office responders should be issued identification badges or screen printed t-shirts identifying them as main office personnel so that staff and volunteers at the site of the crisis can recognize them if they should need to go to the site. The duties of the main office personnel include determining whether or not the site of the incident has adequate staff to handle the crisis. If they don't, staff from the main office or other locations can be sent to assist.

It is suggested that the main office handle media issues until the situation stabilizes. It is best practice to keep the media safely away from the crisis site. Administrators and staff members at the site are busy handling the situation and caring for students and staff. Consider reviewing the "Communication with the Media during a Crisis" section of the plan before speaking to the media.

The **Site Notification Script Form** is designed to provide a rapid way to share information with other schools and sites and ensure that they will receive accurate information and if possible receive it first from the main office rather than from the media. Providing accurate information to other school sites is vital. The other sites may have siblings or other family members of the victims at their location. They may need to consider the impact of the situation on their students, volunteers, staff and operations. The “Site Notification Script” covers the main items that should be included. It is set up as a fill-in the blank form for ease of use. If multiple people are making calls, the script can be filled out, photocopied, distributed to all callers, and read word for word so that the message is consistent and contains all necessary information. The code word indicating the validity of the caller can be established at the start of the year and known to all staff who might answer the phone. If possible, the script should be simultaneously faxed or emailed to each site as calls are made so that the sites have a written copy for reference. Drills should be held occasionally to ensure that each site can be reached in a short time frame.

Multiple copies of the **Communication Log** can be run off and used to keep track of incoming and outgoing calls. Keeping these logs ensures that important information is relayed accurately and that the information does not get lost in the heat of the moment. Documentation is also important for liability and insurance reasons.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES A-G – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Yearly Training Recommendations, Yearly Drill Recommendations, and Yearly Training Schedule (Appendix A) sections are included to ensure maximum readiness. Practice through table talk exercises and/or drills can provide excellent preparation. Introducing the Site Crisis Response Team members to the staff is suggested for two reasons. First, it is done to ensure that staff knows the people by sight who will be in charge in a time of crisis. Second, the team is introduced to increase the confidence level of staff by showing them that knowledgeable people whom they know and trust will be in charge during a crisis. Providing training to all staff members and substitutes using the “Staff Guidelines,” “First Responder,” and “Quick Reference” pages of the plan is suggested to ensure that each school and staff member is prepared. This training may reduce the school’s liability should an event occur. These trainings can be digitally saved for use with new staff throughout the year. Ensuring that several staff members know the location of and how to shut down utilities and electrical and mechanical systems and how to activate power failure phones can be helpful to the fire department. School staff may also need this information during a hazardous material spill if fire persons are not available. Checking fire extinguishers to ensure that they function properly should be done yearly and should be an assigned task for the custodian or one staff member.

Drill and Simulation Ideas (Appendix A) are provided as examples of topics suitable for table talk exercises or drills. Each of the suggested drill or simulation topics represents an actual crisis event experienced by the author or one of the people who used or reviewed these documents. The Site Crisis Response Team can brainstorm and practice other situations that might occur at its school.

The Threat Assessment check list (Appendix B) was taken from materials developed by the Secret Service. It is intended as an example of a process you could use to help determine the level of the threat that the people involved in a crisis might present. Other on-line assessments are available.

The Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome Referral Check List (Appendix C) is **not** meant to be used as a diagnostic tool. Only a trained professional can diagnose Post-Traumatic Shock Syndrome. The check list is intended to be used as a tool to help staff decide who might benefit from a referral to a counselor or other mental health professional for a formal assessment. Crisis Response Team members can also use the list as a self check for their own response to the

situation and need for support. Again, other assessments are available on line or from your local experts.

The section Communication with the Media (Appendix D) was developed to help the Head of the Team and/or Main Office personnel provide accurate and appropriate information to the media. The concept of a single agency spokesperson is considered best practice. The tips are designed to ensure accuracy and consistency of the message. Remember to work with the government agency incident commander on joint releases when appropriate.

The section titled “Group Discussion Format Following a Death or Suicide” (Appendix E) is provided to help staff know what to say to students after this type of event. Other excellent similar resources are available on line. Staff members are often at a loss for how to handle this type of situation. Staff can be trained using this or other similar resources prior to the return of students so that they can handle the situation appropriately. Consider whether or not it would be helpful to have a mental health professional conduct the training.

The suggested contents of the Go-Pack list (Appendix F) are provided in the Appendix section of the plan so that the list is easily accessible. (This list is also provided on the “Secretary Duties” page.) It is important that the Go-Pack is always ready to take out in an emergency.

The suggested First Aid Kit Contents list (Appendix G) is provided as a starting point. Review it and add or delete items to fit your situation. The need/use for most items on the list is obvious. Trash bag and disposable gloves are included to allow for the clean-up of an evacuation site and/or for proper disposal of items that could carry diseases such as bloody bandages. Paper lunch bags are included to assist a person who is hyper-ventilating. Life Savers can be used by diabetics in need of sugar.

APPENDICES H-K – COPIES OF FORMS FOR DUPLICATION

Appendix H contains pages that should be completed each year at each site. They are also placed here for ease of access and duplication. These pages include the “Crisis Team and Location,” the “Emergency Manuals and Supplies” and the “Community Telephone Numbers” pages. In addition to these pages, the telephone trees and the floor plans should be updated if necessary.

Appendix I contains duplicates of the forms used by staff and for training staff. These include: “Staff Guidelines,” “First Responder and Staff Instructions,” and the “Quick Reference Sheet” pages. Again the duplicates are provided here for ease of access and duplication. These pages can be given to all staff each year as part of their yearly training or retraining. They also can be

used to train new staff, substitutes and volunteers as they join the organization. On line video training sessions can be used to train new staff and volunteers thorough out the year.

Appendix J provides duplicates of the Main Office Team pages which also should be updated yearly. They include the “Main Office Crisis Response Team – Multiple Site Crisis” and “Administrator’s Executive Assistant – Multiple Site Crisis” page. The calling tree should be updated as necessary. This section is not used if the school district has only one site.

Appendix K contains duplicates of incident specific forms that might be needed for a specific crisis. These duplicates are included in this section to make them more easily accessible. The documents include: the “Bomb Threat Report” form, the Bomb Threat Evacuation Decision Consideration form, the Agency Notification Script, the Communication Log form and the Reunification form. Having these documents readily available can save vital time during a crisis and provide documentation for insurance and liability reports.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, the information and explanations presented in this document will assist you as you develop or revise a plan for your school. The intent of this Tips document is to provide the reasons behind the contents of the accompanying School Crisis Response Plan document so that you can decide which elements to include in your plan and which items to revise or exclude so that your plan will meet the needs of your school.

It is hoped that the School Crisis Response Plan document will help you prepare for the most common events and give you the confidence and background to handle whatever occurs. If the two documents are helpful to you as you work to provide a safe environment for your students, volunteers and staff, they will have served their purpose.

If you have suggestions for additions or improvements to the School Crisis Response Plan document or the Tips document, please email them to me at Holly@hollyhartconsulting.com.