

## Crisis Response

Children need safe environments if they are to thrive. When that safety is disrupted, for whatever reason, adults need to reassure children that they will be protected. Crises can range from school-related incidents to incidents in the community, such as natural disasters, or the world at large, such as terrorism or war.

School counselors are a vital part of crisis intervention and can help students understand and recover from the many situations that arise, both those inside and outside the school. The school counselor's role during crisis intervention includes:

- Providing crisis counseling for students
- Identifying students who need more intense counseling and post-traumatic intervention for grief/loss
- Providing information to the media on the incident and the school counselor's role in supporting the students
- Supporting parents, teachers and staff as they provide for the students
- Stabilizing the school environment, and helping students return to normalcy

All children react differently to changes, so observe their behavior, and listen to them. Because children often have difficulty expressing their feelings, their grief comes out in their behavior. Their reactions will depend on their emotional development and age, their relationship to the crisis event, the information they receive about what has happened and their past experiences. They may be confused and worried about what might happen in the future. They may fear that similar events will occur in their own lives. When children have been through a difficult experience, they need reassurance. Help your children explore their emotions, and let them know that their feelings are normal.

When should you seek help from a professional for your children's post-crisis behavior? Some aggressive behavior or acting out may be expected. Parents may see anger and sadness. However, if the behaviors continue and seem to prevent the child from continuing a normal routine after a few weeks, professional help may be needed. Your best resource is your child's school counselor, who can provide additional resources for parents and students who are having difficulty adjusting.