

SECTION 8

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

- **Psychological First Aid Handouts** *(Color and BW for Print) - (some available in Spanish at <http://ccis.lausd.net>)*
 - Responding to Crisis Incidents
 - Responding to Child Abuse
 - Responding to Sexual Abuse-For Parents
 - Responding to Bullying
 - Responding to Lockdown (for staff)
- **PFA for Students and Teachers**
- **PFA for Children and Parents**
(available in Spanish at <http://ccis.lausd.net>)

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to Crisis Incidents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

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

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

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

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- "Check in" with student(s) on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g. Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist,



Counselor, Nurse) and community health/mental health services. Make referrals to the appropriate resources who may offer support to student(s).

- Encourage interactions, activities, and team projects with friends and teachers.
- Keep communication open with others involved in the student(s) lives (e.g. parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
- *Note: Consult with DCFS if you suspect child abuse and/or neglect.*

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

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

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

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



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

Responding to Crisis Incidents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

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

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

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

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- "Check in" with student(s) on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g. Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist,



Counselor, Nurse) and community health/mental health services. Make referrals to the appropriate resources who may offer support to student(s).

- Encourage interactions, activities, and team projects with friends and teachers.
- Keep communication open with others involved in the student(s) lives (e.g. parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
- *Note: Consult with DCFS if you suspect child abuse and/or neglect.*

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

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

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

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



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

Responding to Child Abuse

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Just listen and pay attention to the child.
- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that children may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.
- *Note: Do not investigate or probe for details; this may trigger trauma reminders or compromise a legal investigation if questions are leading.*

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Follow District guidelines and procedures regarding notification of an administrator.
- Children need to hear that what happened is not their fault and that they did the right thing by telling.
- Conduct the discussion in private and reassure the child that the disclosure enables adults to help and protect.
- Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules.
- *Note: Do not express doubt or disbelief.*
- *Note: Do not make judgmental statements or place blame.*



3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- Explain your responsibility to report.
- Explain your duty to protect and keep children safe.
- Consider referring the child to learning support staff (e.g., Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse) and finding resources on campus that can offer support to the child.
- “Check in” with children on a regular basis.
- *Note: Do not make promises or false assurances.*



4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event. They can affect your children. Your children will be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues and it will influence how your children cope and behave.
- Monitor conversations that children may hear.
- *Note: Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.*
- *Note: Children often love the person who mistreats them.*

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

- Children may have different reactions, even to the same event.
- Encourage your children to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Help your children problem solve to get through each day successfully.
- Help children set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins.”
- *Note: Over time and with support, individuals generally do better after a stressful event. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a school support staff, community agency, or health care provider.*



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

Responding to Child Abuse

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Just listen and pay attention to the child.
- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that children may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.
- *Note: Do not investigate or probe for details; this may trigger trauma reminders or compromise a legal investigation if questions are leading.*

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Follow District guidelines and procedures regarding notification of an administrator.
- Children need to hear that what happened is not their fault and that they did the right thing by telling.
- Conduct the discussion in private and reassure the child that the disclosure enables adults to help and protect.
- Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules.
- *Note: Do not express doubt or disbelief.*
- *Note: Do not make judgmental statements or place blame.*



3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- Explain your responsibility to report.
- Explain your duty to protect and keep children safe.
- Consider referring the child to learning support staff (e.g., Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse) and finding resources on campus that can offer support to the child.
- “Check in” with children on a regular basis.
- *Note: Do not make promises or false assurances.*



4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event. They can affect your children. Your children will be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues and it will influence how your children cope and behave.
- Monitor conversations that children may hear.
- *Note: Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.*
- *Note: Children often love the person who mistreats them.*

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

- Children may have different reactions, even to the same event.
- Encourage your children to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Help your children problem solve to get through each day successfully.
- Help children set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins.”
- *Note: Over time and with support, individuals generally do better after a stressful event. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a school support staff, community agency, or health care provider.*

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to Sexual Abuse – For Parents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that children who have been sexually abused may display a range of emotional and behavioral reactions (e.g., difficulties sleeping, withdrawn behavior, depression, fear of certain people or places).
- Make time throughout the day to interact with your children and become familiar with who they interact with and what they are doing. Remind children that they can come to you when they need help or want to talk.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Structure, stability and consistency are important for children to feel safe.
- Remind children that you are the adult and are there to protect them. Inform children that they should never keep a secret for fear that someone might be hurt.
- Educate children at a young age about body safety and how they can protect themselves.
- Establish clear expectations and rules about “okay” and “not okay” touches. Give children permission to say “no” to an adult when they are asked to do something uncomfortable.
- It is important not to express doubt or disbelief if a child discloses abuse to you. Fear of not being believed is one of the reasons that children do not disclose.

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- If a child discloses abuse, thank the child for telling you and reassure him/her of your support.
- If you have concerns that your child may have been sexually abused, take your child to a physician. Your physician can discuss your concerns, examine your child, and make necessary referrals and reports.
- If you know or suspect that a child is being or has been sexually abused, call the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 800.422.4453 or for immediate assistance, call 911.
- Connect children with the appropriate mental health and health services, as needed.

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings and reactions. They can affect your child. Your child will be watching for both verbal and nonverbal cues, and it may influence how your child copes and behaves. If a child discloses abuse, it is important to remain calm, continue to listen, and never blame the child.
- Receiving information about abuse is likely difficult to hear and process. You might experience a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger, or become tearful or cry. It is important to share with the child why you are feeling this way. For example, “I am not angry at you, I am angry at what happened to you and at the person who hurt you.” Or “I am crying because I am sad about what happened to you.”
- Show children the importance of advocating for others and asking for support by seeking help when someone you know has been abused. It is all right to get help when you are going through a difficult experience.

5 TEACH strategies for personal safety and how to seek help.

- Children may have different reactions, even to the same event.
- Teach children about “okay” and “not okay” touch.
- Teach children that no adult should ask them to play games and keep any secrets or to play secretive games.
- Teach children that no adult should ask them to touch their private body parts or to touch themselves.
- As children age, create an environment at home in which sexual topics can be discussed comfortably.
- Teach your child(ren) help seeking behaviors.
- Help your child(ren) identify who they can go to for support, at home and at school.
- Teach children that sometimes even the people we trust and love do things that are hurtful, but that does not make it okay.
- Teach children to say something until someone believes them and helps them.





Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

Responding to Sexual Abuse – For Parents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that children who have been sexually abused may display a range of emotional and behavioral reactions (e.g., difficulties sleeping, withdrawn behavior, depression, fear of certain people or places).
- Make time throughout the day to interact with your children and become familiar with who they interact with and what they are doing. Remind children that they can come to you when they need help or want to talk.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Structure, stability and consistency are important for children to feel safe.
- Remind children that you are the adult and are there to protect them. Inform children that they should never keep a secret for fear that someone might be hurt.
- Educate children at a young age about body safety and how they can protect themselves.
- Establish clear expectations and rules about “okay” and “not okay” touches. Give children permission to say “no” to an adult when they are asked to do something uncomfortable.
- It is important not to express doubt or disbelief if a child discloses abuse to you. Fear of not being believed is one of the reasons that children do not disclose.

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- If a child discloses abuse, thank the child for telling you and reassure him/her of your support.
- If you have concerns that your child may have been sexually abused, take your child to a physician. Your physician can discuss your concerns, examine your child, and make necessary referrals and reports.
- If you know or suspect that a child is being or has been sexually abused, call the Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 800.422.4453 or for immediate assistance, call 911.
- Connect children with the appropriate mental health and health services, as needed.

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings and reactions. They can affect your child. Your child will be watching for both verbal and nonverbal cues, and it may influence how your child copes and behaves. If a child discloses abuse, it is important to remain calm, continue to listen, and never blame the child.
- Receiving information about abuse is likely difficult to hear and process. You might experience a range of emotions, such as sadness, anger, or become tearful or cry. It is important to share with the child why you are feeling this way. For example, “I am not angry at you, I am angry at what happened to you and at the person who hurt you.” Or “I am crying because I am sad about what happened to you.”
- Show children the importance of advocating for others and asking for support by seeking help when someone you know has been abused. It is all right to get help when you are going through a difficult experience.

5 TEACH strategies for personal safety and how to seek help.

- Children may have different reactions, even to the same event.
- Teach children about “okay” and “not okay” touch.
- Teach children that no adult should ask them to play games and keep any secrets or to play secretive games.
- Teach children that no adult should ask them to touch their private body parts or to touch themselves.
- As children age, create an environment at home in which sexual topics can be discussed comfortably.
- Teach your child(ren) help seeking behaviors.
- Help your child(ren) identify who they can go to for support, at home and at school.
- Teach children that sometimes even the people we trust and love do things that are hurtful, but that does not make it okay.
- Teach children to say something until someone believes them and helps them.



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to Bullying, Cyber Bullying or Hazing

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Talk with your students.
- Listen to what your students say and how they act.
- Explain to your students that if someone they know is being bullied, it is important not to walk away from the situation. Sometimes targets of bullying, cyberbullying or hazing, are too scared to get the right help.
- Be there for those students who need help and let other students know the importance of telling a staff member if they become aware of bullying, cyberbullying or hazing.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Intervene immediately with any act of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- If a student is being bullied, help him/her explore ways to stay safe, such as by hanging out in an area where there are adults supervising, or avoiding walking home alone.
- *Note: Report all bullying, cyber bullying or hazing incidents directly to the school administrator or the school complaint manager.*



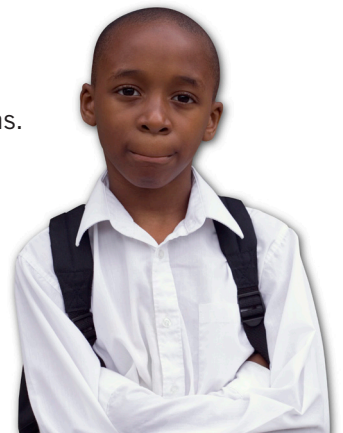
- Remind students to keep telling adults, until someone listens and does something to address the issue.

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- Students frequently watch adults' interactions with other students, and their reactions in the midst of crisis. Adults fail to protect students when they witness an act of bullying and ignore it.
- Lead by example; model advocacy and the protection of students by intervening appropriately, correcting behavior, and seeking the proper support for all parties involved.

5 TEACH about normal stress symptoms and how to cope.

- Teach students and staff about the consequences of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- Inform your students about appropriate online behavior, and teach them to avoid cyber bullying.
- Teach students help seeking behaviors and talk to them about what they can say or do when they become aware of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- Help students identify trusted adults at school and at home whom they can go to for support.
- Be aware of the policies and the laws related to bullying, cyber bullying or hazing so that students understand the legal ramifications of their actions.



3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- Explain to your students that if someone they know is being bullied, it is OK to ask for help. Explain that they are not "snitching" on others by saying something to an adult; they are helping to protect themselves and the people they know.



Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

Responding to Bullying, Cyber Bullying or Hazing

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Talk with your students.
- Listen to what your students say and how they act.
- Explain to your students that if someone they know is being bullied, it is important not to walk away from the situation. Sometimes targets of bullying, cyberbullying or hazing, are too scared to get the right help.
- Be there for those students who need help and let other students know the importance of telling a staff member if they become aware of bullying, cyberbullying or hazing.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Intervene immediately with any act of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- If a student is being bullied, help him/her explore ways to stay safe, such as by hanging out in an area where there are adults supervising, or avoiding walking home alone.
- *Note: Report all bullying, cyber bullying or hazing incidents directly to the school administrator or the school complaint manager.*



- Remind students to keep telling adults, until someone listens and does something to address the issue.

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- Students frequently watch adults' interactions with other students, and their reactions in the midst of crisis. Adults fail to protect students when they witness an act of bullying and ignore it.
- Lead by example; model advocacy and the protection of students by intervening appropriately, correcting behavior, and seeking the proper support for all parties involved.

5 TEACH about normal stress symptoms and how to cope.

- Teach students and staff about the consequences of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- Inform your students about appropriate online behavior, and teach them to avoid cyber bullying.
- Teach students help seeking behaviors and talk to them about what they can say or do when they become aware of bullying, cyber bullying or hazing.
- Help students identify trusted adults at school and at home whom they can go to for support.
- Be aware of the policies and the laws related to bullying, cyber bullying or hazing so that students understand the legal ramifications of their actions.



3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- Explain to your students that if someone they know is being bullied, it is OK to ask for help. Explain that they are not "snitching" on others by saying something to an adult; they are helping to protect themselves and the people they know.

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to a Campus Lock Down

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Follow District guidelines and procedures regarding school lock downs.
- Give students, parents/guardians, and staff reassurance, support, and encouragement.
- Pay attention to any expressed feelings of fear and/or concern.
- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that individuals may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as through anger, crying, or withdrawal.
- *Note: Be aware that a campus lock down may trigger trauma reminders.*

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Continue to follow directives as indicated by the Incident Commander (i.e., school site administrator, Educational Service Center administrator, law enforcement) to ensure the safety and protection of students, staff, and parents/guardians.
- Establish a pre-arranged reunification area for parents/guardians to meet with their children.
- Reassure students, parents/guardians, and staff by explaining that the lock down procedure is meant to establish the safety of everyone on campus.
- Limit access to smart phones, the Internet, or live television that may show disturbing scenes or inaccurate information about the event.
- Whenever possible, maintain classroom/office routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations, as well as consistent rules.
- *Note: Do not make judgmental statements, spread rumors, or place blame regarding the event.*

3 CONNECT through communication, resources, and referrals.

- Explain the responsibility to report in the event that an individual is a witness to an incident or has information regarding the incident.
- Explain your duty to protect and keep students safe.
- "Check in" with students on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g., Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School

Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse) and refer to the appropriate person who can offer support to student(s).

- Explore opportunities for all school staff to safely support one another.
- In the aftermath of a critical event, triage/screen students and/or staff most at risk for trauma, as appropriate. Those in closest physical proximity to the critical event or in closest emotional proximity to the victims/experience should be identified. The greater the exposure or physical proximity to a critical event or violent act/attack, the greater the risk of trauma. Consequently, there is a more immediate need to provide a sense of physical and emotional safety.
- *Note: Do not make promises or false assurances.*

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event. They can affect your students; they will likely be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues and it may influence how your students cope and behave.
- Take constructive actions to assure safety.
- Monitor conversations, text messages, and phone calls that students may engage in during the event. Inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to misunderstandings, escalation, and/or trauma reactions.
- *Note: Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.*

5 TEACH about normal stress symptoms and how to cope.

- Students, staff, and parents/guardians may have different reactions, even to the same event. Individuals may also require different amounts of time to cope and adjust.
- Encourage students, staff, and parents/guardians to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Encourage students, staff, and parents/guardians to re-establish their daily routine and activities as soon as possible.
- *Note: Over time and with support, individuals generally do better after a stressful event. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a school support staff, community agency, or health care provider.*

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to a Campus Lock Down

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Follow District guidelines and procedures regarding school lock downs.
- Give students, parents/guardians, and staff reassurance, support, and encouragement.
- Pay attention to any expressed feelings of fear and/or concern.
- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that individuals may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as through anger, crying, or withdrawal.
- *Note: Be aware that a campus lock down may trigger trauma reminders.*

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Continue to follow directives as indicated by the Incident Commander (i.e., school site administrator, Educational Service Center administrator, law enforcement) to ensure the safety and protection of students, staff, and parents/guardians.
- Establish a pre-arranged reunification area for parents/guardians to meet with their children.
- Reassure students, parents/guardians, and staff by explaining that the lock down procedure is meant to establish the safety of everyone on campus.
- Limit access to smart phones, the Internet, or live television that may show disturbing scenes or inaccurate information about the event.
- Whenever possible, maintain classroom/office routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations, as well as consistent rules.
- *Note: Do not make judgmental statements, spread rumors, or place blame regarding the event.*

3 CONNECT through communication, resources, and referrals.

- Explain the responsibility to report in the event that an individual is a witness to an incident or has information regarding the incident.
- Explain your duty to protect and keep students safe.
- "Check in" with students on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g., Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School

Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse) and refer to the appropriate person who can offer support to student(s).

- Explore opportunities for all school staff to safely support one another.
- In the aftermath of a critical event, triage/screen students and/or staff most at risk for trauma, as appropriate. Those in closest physical proximity to the critical event or in closest emotional proximity to the victims/experience should be identified. The greater the exposure or physical proximity to a critical event or violent act/attack, the greater the risk of trauma. Consequently, there is a more immediate need to provide a sense of physical and emotional safety.
- *Note: Do not make promises or false assurances.*

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event. They can affect your students; they will likely be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues and it may influence how your students cope and behave.
- Take constructive actions to assure safety.
- Monitor conversations, text messages, and phone calls that students may engage in during the event. Inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to misunderstandings, escalation, and/or trauma reactions.
- *Note: Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.*

5 TEACH about normal stress symptoms and how to cope.

- Students, staff, and parents/guardians may have different reactions, even to the same event. Individuals may also require different amounts of time to cope and adjust.
- Encourage students, staff, and parents/guardians to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Encourage students, staff, and parents/guardians to re-establish their daily routine and activities as soon as possible.
- *Note: Over time and with support, individuals generally do better after a stressful event. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a school support staff, community agency, or health care provider.*

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID (PFA) FOR
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**



**Helping you help your students
in times of disaster, school
crises, or emergencies.**

As a teacher, you are in an excellent position to help your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency.



Just as you help connect students with appropriate academic and counseling services under normal circumstances, you are in an excellent position to help your students return to school, stay in school, continue to learn, and return to their usual school-based activities after such an event.

You can help your students if you

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

the **steps of PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID** for your students after
a disaster, school crisis, or
emergency.

These steps can help them
bounce back more quickly.

Getting Started: Understanding the Effect of a Disaster, School Crisis, or Emergency

THINK ABOUT your students’
“**DIRECT EXPERIENCE**” with the
event.

“Direct experience” means a **FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE** of the event (physically experiencing or directly seeing it as it happens).

After the event, changes can happen in students’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Your students may worry about family members, classmates, friends, or pets they care about, and may worry that it will happen again.

Common reactions to disasters, school crises and emergencies include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble concentrating and listening, and not finishing work or assignments. Your students may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience recovery efforts after the event.

When students share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the event, LISTEN for RISK FACTORS for adverse reactions.

Risk factors that may indicate a counseling referral is needed for students include:

- ☐ loss of a family member, schoolmate, or friend
- ☐ observing serious injury or the death of another person
- ☐ family members or friends missing after the event
- ☐ getting hurt or becoming sick due to the event
- ☐ home loss, family moves, changes in neighborhoods, changes in schools, and/or loss of belongings
- ☐ being unable to evacuate quickly
- ☐ past traumatic experiences or losses
- ☐ pet loss

If a student has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider referring her or him to your school psychologist, counselor, or social worker.

Now that you know what can affect your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency, you're ready to
**LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT –
MODEL & TEACH!**

1. Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

The first important step to help your students after an event is to **listen and pay attention** to what they say and how they act. Remember that your students may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, like increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.

Let your students know you are willing to listen and talk about the event, or to make referrals to talk to an appropriate professional, if they prefer it. Use the following questions to talk with your students. **You can listen for clues that indicate when students are having a hard time. Write down a few examples that may be helpful to note:**

1. What might be preventing a student from coming to or staying in school?

2. What might be preventing a student from paying attention in class or doing homework?

3. What might be preventing a student from returning to other school-based activities?



Listen, observe, and note any changes in:

- * behavior and/or mood
- * school performance
- * interactions with schoolmates and teachers
- * participation in school-based activities
- * behaviors at home that parents discuss with you

Listen, 2. Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

You can **help make your students feel better** by doing some or all of the following:

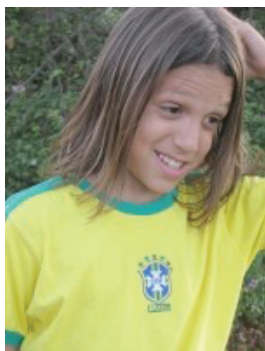


- * Answer questions simply and honestly, clearing up confusion students may have about what happened.
- * Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions to the event.
- * Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but **don't force it**.
- * Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe from harm.
- * Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students.
- * Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviors.

- * Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations, consistent rules, and immediate feedback; limit unnecessary changes.
- * Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning.
- * Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event.
Remember, what's not upsetting to you and other adults may upset and confuse your students, and vice versa.
- * Encourage students to “take a break” from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event.
- * Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community.

List other **things you do** that help your students feel better. Sharing lists with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.

Listen, Protect, 3. Connect – Model & Teach



Reaching out to people in your school and community will help your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency. These connections will build

strength for everyone. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- * “Check in” with students on a regular basis.
- * Find resources that can offer support to your students and classroom.
- * Keep communication open with others involved in your students’ lives (parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
- * Restore interactive school activities, including sports, club meetings, student-serviced projects, and student government.

- * Encourage student activities with friends, including class projects and extracurricular activities.
- * Empathize with your students by allowing a little more time for them to learn new materials.
- * Build on your students' strengths. Find ways to help them use what they have learned in the past to help them deal with the event.
- * Remind your students that major disasters, crises, and emergencies are rare, and discuss other times they have felt safe.

List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community. Share your list with other teachers to create a larger list of activities and resources.

Listen, Protect, Connect – 4. Model & Teach

As you help your students after a disaster, crisis, or emergency, your **efforts may be more successful** – and you may be less stressed – if you **keep in mind:**

- * It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event, which can be seen and can affect your students.



- * How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your students cope and behave. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues.
- * Monitor conversations that students may hear.
- * Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.

For more information, please visit **www.ready.gov**

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & 5. Teach

Talk to your students about **expected reactions after a crisis** (emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and physiological). There are “normal” reactions to abnormal events.

- * Different people may have very different reactions, even within the same family. After the event, people may also have different amounts of time they need to cope and adjust.
- * **Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.**
- * Help your students problem-solve to get through each day successfully.
- * **Help your students set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins” for the students and your classroom.**
- * Remind students that with time and assistance, things generally get better. If they don't, they should let a parent or teacher know.



It is okay for you to seek professional help for yourself:

- ✓ When you have feelings of being overwhelmed or overly stressed that don't go away over time.
- ✓ When you are not sure about how to handle a situation with a student or a family member.

Over time,

- * **you,**
- * **your students,**
- * **their families,**
- * **your classroom,**

can EXPECT RECOVERY.



For More Information

Please visit **www.ready.gov**

Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with U.S.

Department of Homeland Security. The *Ready* Campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks

and

www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement.

**For more information on
Listen, Protect, Connect —
Model and Teach**

contact Dr. Merritt Schreiber at m.schreiber@ucla.edu.

Acknowledgements



Thanks to the support of the following centers at the University of California Los Angeles, School of Public Health: **Center for Public Health and Disasters** and **Health and Media Research Group**. The authors also thank **Crisis Counseling & Intervention Services** of the **Los Angeles Unified School District**.



**“Listen, Protect, and Connect — Model & Teach”
Psychological First Aid for Children**

© 2006 M. Schreiber, R. Gurwitsch, M. Wong.
All rights reserved.

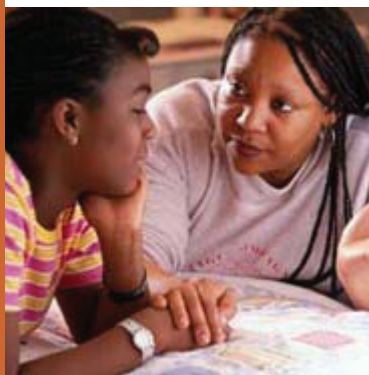
copy editor/designer: Rachel C. Flores

For more information, please visit **www.ready.gov**

For more information, please visit [**www.ready.gov**](http://www.ready.gov)

Listen, Protect, and Connect

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID FOR
CHILDREN AND PARENTS**



**Helping you and your child
in times of disaster.**

As a parent, you are in the best position to help your child in the event of a disaster.



Just as you talk to your child's doctor about his or her health, such as what to do when your child is sick or hurt, you can also talk to your child's

doctor, mental health professional, or someone at your child's school who can help you and your child after a disaster.

You can help your child if you

Listen, Protect, and Connect

the **three steps of “psychological first aid”** for your child after a disaster.

These steps can help your child bounce back from a disaster.

Getting Started: Understanding the Effect of a Disaster on Your Child

THINK ABOUT your child's
“**DIRECT EXPERIENCE**” with the
disaster.

“Direct experience” means a **FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE** of the disaster (physically experiencing or directly seeing the event as it happens).

After a disaster, changes can happen in a child's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Children may worry about family members, friends, or pets that they care about and worry if the disaster will happen again.

Common reactions to disasters include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble listening, and not finishing work or chores. Your child may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience the recovery efforts after the disaster.

THINK ABOUT and IDENTIFY “CONTRIBUTING FACTORS” that can increase your child’s reaction to the disaster.

“Contributing factors” include (check all that apply to your child):

- ☐ loss of a family member or friend
- ☐ seeing serious injury or the death of another person
- ☐ family members who are missing after the disaster
- ☐ getting hurt or becoming sick due to the disaster
- ☐ being unable to evacuate quickly
- ☐ home loss, family moves, changes in schools or neighborhoods, and/or loss of belongings
- ☐ past traumatic experiences
- ☐ pet loss

If your child has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider talking to his or her doctor, a child mental health professional, or someone at your child’s school to get help.

Now that you know about things that can affect your child after a disaster, you’re ready to
LISTEN, PROTECT, and CONNECT!

1. Listen, Protect, and Connect

The first important step to help your child after a disaster is to **listen and pay attention** to what your child says and how he or she acts. Remember that your child may also show his or her feelings in nonverbal ways.

Let your child know you are willing to listen and talk about the disaster. You can use the following questions to talk with your child. Afterward, **write down how he or she answers:**



1. What does your child think happened and is now happening?

2. What does your child understand about the help disaster responders give to people during and after an event?

3. What is your child most upset about?

4. What is your child most confused about?

5. Other items to note:

Listen, observe, and take notes about **changes in behavior** you see:

* Changes in behavior and/or mood:

* Changes at school:

* Changes in sleep and/or eating:

* Changes with family and/or friends:

* Other changes you note:

Listen, 2. Protect, and Connect

You can **help make your child feel better** by doing some or all of the following:



- * Answer questions simply and honestly (you may need to do this many times).
- * Try to clear up any confusion your child has. Let your child know that he or she is not to blame for the disaster.
- * Provide opportunities for your child to talk, draw, and play, but **don't force it**.
- * Learn what is in place and what is coming up in your neighborhood in response to the disaster.
- * With your child's help, develop a family safety plan and practice it (http://www.ready.gov/kids/_downloads/familyplan.pdf).
- * Talk to your child about what is going on to make him or her safe at home, at school, and in your neighborhood.

- * Limit access to television and newspapers that show disturbing scenes of the disaster. **Remember that what's not upsetting to you and other adults may upset and confuse your child.**
- * Talk about common reactions that adults and children may have during and after a disaster.
- * Maintain “normal” daily tasks and activities as much as possible; limit unnecessary changes.
- * Encourage your child to express his or her thoughts and feelings about what has happened. Let your child know you are interested in what he or she thinks and feels, and listen attentively when your child talks to you.
- * Take a break once in a while from talk and activities related to the disaster.
- * Find ways for your child to feel helpful to your family and others (helping around the house, neighborhood, or school).

List other **things you do** that make your child feel better:

Listen, Protect, and 3. Connect



Reaching out to family, friends, and people in your neighborhood will help your child after a disaster. These connections will build strength for both you and your child. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- * Find people who can offer support to your child and your family.
- * Keep communication open with others involved in your child's life (doctors, teachers, coaches, etc.).
- * Check out school and community resources for disaster survivors.
- * Spend extra time with your child and family.

- * Encourage after-school activities for your child.
- * Have a family meeting and discuss how everyone can stay in touch if separated during or after a disaster. Create a Family Communications Plan (http://www.ready.gov/kids/_downloads/familyplan.pdf).
- * Set small goals with your child. Praise him or her for even small achievements.
- * Build on your child's strengths. Find ways to help your child use what he or she has learned in the past to help your child deal with the disaster.
- * Remind your child that a disaster is rare, and discuss other times when he or she has felt safe.
- * Learn and seek out other information that may be helpful to you, your child, and family.

List other **things you do** that connect you, your child, and family with the community:

Keep in Mind

As you help your child after a disaster, your **“listen, protect, and connect”** efforts may be more successful — and you may be less stressed — if you keep in mind:

- * It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event, which can be seen and can affect your child.
- * How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your child copes and behaves.
- * Show your child the importance of keeping up good physical and mental health even during stressful times.
- * Each family member may have a different way or time period needed to cope with disaster.
- * Children of different ages understand and react differently to disasters.
- * A child's behavior may get worse before it gets better.
- * Your child may be more demanding of your time and attention.

- * Extra patience with your child is needed.
- * For many children, any different behavior due to a disaster improves over time.
- * Your child will look to you as a role model for handling the disaster and what happens next.

It is okay to seek professional help:

- ✓ If you checked off any boxes on page 5.
- ✓ When your child's behavior is not getting better over time.
- ✓ When you or other family members have feelings of being overwhelmed or overly stressed that don't go away over time.
- ✓ When you are not sure about how to handle a situation with your child.
- ✓ When you feel unsure, not able, or unfamiliar with how to guide your child.

**Remember that you
and your child can
EXPECT RECOVERY.**

For More Information

Please visit **www.ready.gov**

Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The *Ready* Campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

**For more information on
Listen, Protect, and Connect:
Psychological First Aid
for Children and Parents,**
contact Dr. Merritt Schreiber
at **m.schreiber@ucla.edu**.

Acknowledgements



Thanks to the support of the following centers at the University of California Los Angeles, School of Public Health:
Center for Public Health and Disasters and **Health and Media Research Group.**



**Listen, Protect, and Connect:
Psychological First Aid for Children and Parents**

© 2006 M. Schreiber and R. Gurwitch.

All rights reserved.

copy editor/designer: Rachel C. Flores

For more information, please visit [**www.ready.gov**](http://www.ready.gov)