

Teachers Helping Children After a Critical Incident

This resource was designed to help teachers assist children and is useful for general disasters as well as emergencies that occur in the lives of individual children.

Emergencies are very traumatic events for children. It's difficult for them to understand and accept that there are events in their lives that can't be controlled or predicted. Worst of all, we adults can't "fix" a disaster, can't solve it, and can't keep it from happening again.

One common way to organize the above interventions is to set up a "Drop in Room." A Drop in Room is a safe, welcoming place for students or staff to gather during the school day for group or individual support from trained team members.

Ways Teachers Can Assist Students

- Cope with your own natural feelings of helplessness, fear, anger, until you do this, you won't be able to effectively help the children
- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of distress and post-traumatic stress reactions
- Put the emergency or critical incident in context; provide a perspective
- Communicate a positive "I'm not helpless" attitude
- Start the healing process; help children to feel relieved and soothed
- Identify children who may need intervention – refer to the appropriate mental health care profession
- Consider the use of comfort animals in weeks following event

Ways Schools Can Assist Employees

- Make all employees aware of the Employee Assistance Program
- Provide a list of support groups
- Allow group meeting time
- Allow time for teachers to take a break during the day
- Provide on-site counseling to employees and spouses
- Be as transparent as possible concerning all facts of the event
- Consider the use of comfort animals in weeks following event