



**Responding to Terrorism  
through the U. S. Department of Education's Lens**

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## Abstract

Since school psychologists enact an important role on a crisis team, they need to increase their awareness and knowledge of both terrorism and crisis management. This paper and accompanying workshop address three objectives: (1) School psychologists will increase their awareness and knowledge of the threat, nature, elements, types, targets, and effects of terrorism; (2) The clinicians will be able to explain the six goals of on-site mental health care: protect, direct, connect, detect, select, and validate; and (3) The practitioners will be able to describe the U.S. Department of Education's *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*.

To prepare for this presentation, this certified school psychologist integrated journal and on-line research. The results of the review confirm the necessity of crisis management teams. The conclusion indicates that crisis preparation is crucial. The implications suggest that every school community needs to have a crisis management plan. The adages, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" and "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst" are practical guidelines to follow. (Contains eleven references and five appendices.)

## **Introduction**

**Although schools may or may not be the target of terrorist attacks, the unexpected events affect them. On September 11, 2001, two terrorist piloted airplanes deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center and killed scores of innocent persons. Within the Trade Center's vicinity were four elementary schools and three high schools. Thousands of students experienced the dust cloud from the collapsing building. Many students became frightened witnesses, and others became anxious. At the outset of the human disaster, their school educators and staff immediately supported and protected them. Because of the premeditated and unforeseen human disaster, the school had a lot of decisions to make. This illustration of an immediate and unanticipated decision-making process is why each school, school district, and community needs to be ready and to have a School/Community Crisis Plan in place.**

**Because of the new terrorist weapons of mass destruction (biological, nuclear, incendiary, chemical, and explosive), schools need to work together and to communicate with community resources. Surviving domestic or international terrorism is greatly enhanced when a comprehensive School Crisis/Community Plan is available and activated.**

**As one team member, school psychologists enact essential crisis management roles. In order to prepare for future crises, school psychologists at this workshop will have the opportunity (1) to increase their awareness and knowledge of the threat, nature, elements, types, targets, and effects of terrorism and of the use of weapons of mass destruction as well as how they impact the safety, health, and welfare of school members and the community; (2) to identify the six goals of on-site mental health care: protect (safeguard), direct (guide), connect (unite), detect**

(screen), select (refer), and validate (affirm) (Young, Ford, & Watson, n.d.); and (3) to describe the *U.S. Department of Education's Practical Information on Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. Those are this workshop's objectives.

Because of terrorism, the role of school psychologists has been changing and expanding. School psychologists now need to become more proactive and more familiar with terrorism and how to prepare their students, colleagues, staff, and community for its psychological and multiple consequences. These school clinicians need to concentrate on primary prevention while still trained in and ready to activate secondary and tertiary prevention. They need to be problem solvers and ready to implement Crisis Prevention, Crisis Preparedness, Crisis Management, and Crisis Resolution.

School psychologists need to be in the foreground. Their contributions will be helpful in developing school safety techniques and crisis planning strategies. There are several crisis planning approaches. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) (n.d.) introduced a model of school crisis prevention and intervention identified as *PREPaRE: School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Curriculum*. This paradigm includes the following six hierarchical and sequential set of activities and adds the conjunction "and" as the fifth connecting step of the acronym: (1) Prevent, (2) Reaffirm, (3) Evaluate (4) Provide, (5) and (6) Respond, as well as (7) Examine. Since school psychologists are somewhat familiar with PREPaRE, the emphasis in this workshop will be to introduce the participants to the 2003 U. S. Department of Education's prototype that is described in its 146 page brochure: *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*.

## Terrorism

The National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (2001) identifies three types of disasters: natural (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires); (2) technological (chemical explosions, fires, toxic spills, transport accidents); and (3) criminal (arson, gang violence, riots, mass killings, terrorist acts). Our workshop concern in this workshop is terrorism which is part of the criminal typology. Terrorism is not new but is as old as human history.

Throughout the years, its name and definitions changed. Today, there is no consensus on how to define it. In a *Terrorism: the Problems of Definition* (2003) website article, The Center for Defense Information (CDI) includes several definitions of terrorism. Two are shared here. (1) The U. S. State Department defines it as “premeditated, politically motivated violence, perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” (2) The U.S. Department of Defense defines it as “the calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”

The Center for Defense Information identifies three inter-related elements in American definitions: the terrorists’ motives (ends), identification, and methods (means). Williams and Head (2006) recognize three elements to terrorism: violence, fear, and intimidation (p. 25). Terrorism can be domestic or international.

Paul Pillar, a former deputy chief of the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center, is quoted in the same CDI article, *Terrorism: the Problems of Definition* (2003). He identifies four key elements of terrorism: (1) It is premeditated, planned in advance; (2) It is political whose purpose is to change the existing political order;

**(3) It is aimed at civilians, not at the military; and (4) It is carried out by sub national groups, and not by an army of a nation. Unlike the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Pillar emphasizes terrorism's political, and not its criminal aspect.**

**According to the Council on Foreign Relations (n.d.), there are several forms of terrorism: (1) nationalist (the aim is to form a separate state); (2) religious (it furthers the terrorists' belief of divinely commanded purposes); (3) state-sponsored (radical states use it as foreign policy); (4) left-wing (the goal is to destroy capitalism and to replace it with a socialist state); (5) right-wing (the intent is to destroy capitalism and to replace it with a fascist regime); (6) anarchist (the purpose is to overthrow the current government). Additional forms include: (7) suicidal (believers willingly sacrifice their lives for a terrorist purpose); (8) narcoterrorism (believers use the drug trade to finance terrorism); and (9) cyber terrorism (terrorists disrupt computers and networks). Regardless of its type, "terrorism strikes immediate victims, but its true target" is the population at large (Williams & Head, 2006, pp. 27-28).**

**Bentley College Model United Nations' (n.d) website identifies terrorists' past and current violent means to achieve political goals: (1) Past instances include "destruction, random killing, torturing and killing of prisoners, hanging and crucifying in public, abducting women and children and assassinating leaders, detonating a bomb, converting jets into guided missiles, terrorizing innocent people, and causing panic"; and (2) Contemporary means involve "same as above as well as technological advances that include weapons of mass destruction: biological, nuclear, incendiary, chemical, radiological, and explosive."**

In its 2002 *Weapons of Mass Destruction* brochure, the American Red Cross recognizes four targets of planned terrorist incidents. (1) “critical infrastructure systems (power plants, phone companies, water treatment plants, mass transit systems, and hospitals; (2) public buildings or assembly areas (shopping malls, convention centers, entertainment venues, churches, and tourist destinations); (3) symbolic or historic sites (sites that have a perceived cultural or social importance); and (4) controversial facilities or businesses (abortion clinics, banks, trade centers, and nuclear facilities)”(p.8).

In an 2003 website article, *Terrorism Supplement to the Indiana Department of Education’s Checklist for a Safe and Secure School Environment*, The Indiana Department of Education (n.d.) recognizes two cautions for secondary and multi-agent devices: (1) “All school staff must be aware that secondary devices may be employed by terrorists, which are designed to cripple, harm, or kill the first responders; and (2) Awareness is important as, for example, a dirty bomb may combine conventional explosive with radioactive material.”)

Everly & Mitchell (2001) share *America under attack: The “10 Commandments” of Responding to Mass. Terrorist Attacks*. They are: (1) Terrorism is psychological warfare, and death and destruction are only means to an end; (2) Set-up different types of crisis intervention hot-lines; (3) Train individuals to be resilient when confronted with terrorism; (4) Work with the media to disseminate on-going information; (5) Do whatever is needed to re-establish physical safety; (6) Request support from the community’s leaders; (7) Re-establish regular community routines as soon as possible; (8) Re-establish community cohesion through symbols; (9) Start rituals to honor the survivors, the rescuers, and the dead; and (10) When intervening, “do no harm” (pp. 133-135).

## **The Six Goals of On-site Mental Health Care**

**In responding to the needs of those individuals impacted by a disaster (including a terrorist attack), Young et al (n.d.) include the following six mental health providers' goals in responding to a disaster: (1) Protect: "Help preserve survivors' and workers' safety, privacy, health and self-esteem"; (2) Direct: "Get people where they belong, help them to organize, prioritize, and plan"; (3) Connect: "Help people communicate supportively with family, peers, and resources"; (4) Detect: "Screen, triage, and provide crisis care to those at-risk for severe problems"; (5) Select: "Refer people to health, spiritual, mental health, or social and financial services"; and "(6) Validate: "Use formal and informal educational opportunities to affirm the normalcy and value of each person's reactions, concerns, ways of coping, and goals for future."**

## **The United States Department of Education's Crisis Management Guide**

**Emergency planning is a necessity. The terrorist events of September 11 shocked the United States and ushered in a new age of terrorism. The unexpected attack shattered the practical certitude of everyday safety and security. The U.S. Department of Education developed its *Crisis Management Guide* "to give schools, districts, and communities the critical concepts and components of good crisis planning, stimulate thinking about the crisis preparedness process, and provide examples of promising practices" (p. 1-3). It is not a cookbook approach. Communities need to study the *Crisis Management Guide* (from here on referred to as the *Guide*) but should apply it with modifications to meet their local situations and conditions.**

The *Guide* includes four sequential phases of crisis management: (1) Mitigation and Prevention (2) Preparedness (3) Response and (4) Recovery. To manage crises, plans need to be continuously reviewed and revised. In this research paper's "Appendix" are the *Guide's* Action Checklists that school psychologists can remove and use for crisis management planning and response. Each of the four phases will be briefly described.

The first crisis management phase is dual: *Mitigation and Prevention*. Both Mitigation and Prevention try to eliminate the need for response. "Although all disasters, natural and human, cannot be predicted, schools and communities that are prepared can minimize or mitigate their catastrophic impact." Some preparations that schools can make are: "assessing and addressing the safety and integrity of facilities (window seals, HVAC systems, building structure), security (functioning locks, controlled access to the school), and the culture and climate of schools (through policy and curricula) are all important for preventing and mitigating possible future crises" (p. 2-2).

In the *Guide*, the U.S. Department of Education quoted the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA's) "goal of mitigation" that reduces the need for response: "Mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from a hazard event. Mitigation encourages long-term reduction of hazard vulnerability" (p. 2-3). The objective of Mitigation's partner, Prevention, is to "create a safe and orderly learning environment" (p. 2-4). One of its principal aspects is "threat assessment," that identifies students, staff, or others who may pose a threat to themselves or to others (p. 2-4). Turn to this paper's "Appendix A" (Mitigating and Prevention Action Checklist).

The second crisis management phase is *Preparedness*: Preparedness “facilitates a rapid, coordinated, and effective response when a crisis occurs” (p. 3-1). Some steps “start by identifying who should be involved in developing the crisis plan. They include training and drills. Delegating responsibilities and breaking the process down into manageable steps will help planners develop the plan” (p. 3-3). Refer to “Appendix B” (Preparedness Action Checklist).

The third crisis management phase is *Response*. This is “the time to follow the crisis plan and make use of preparations” (p. 4-1). Hopefully, the crisis team executed drills to know exactly what to do and who does what. In turn, the practice dry runs will pay dividends to the students, educators, staff, parents, and the community, each knowing what to expect and what to do. No matter how efficiently the crisis team prepares, surprises happen during the confusion. Yet, the response should be immediate. During this stage, the crisis team considers the need for evacuation, lock down, emergency triage, supplies, or other actions. Proceed to “Appendix C” (Response Action Checklist).

The fourth crisis management phase is *Recovery*. “Here, the goal is to return to learning and to restore the infrastructure as quickly as possible” (p. 5-1). The focus now is on assessing the emotional needs of impacted students, educators, staff, parents, and others. In addition, the school buildings need safety checks before students return. After a crisis, students need a caring, warm, and trusting environment (p. 5-4). Recovery takes time, and each person heals at a unique pace. As recovery continues, the anniversaries of the crisis remind the survivors of what they experienced. The crisis team assesses what worked, what did not work, and begins to revise and update the plan to make it better.

**Crisis Readiness is very important to minimize the effects of terrorists' actions. According to the *Guide*, terrorism, like other incidents, may result in the following: (1) "damage beyond school boundaries (as with a hurricane); (2) victims who are contaminated (as with a hazardous materials spill); (3) a crime scene to protect (as with arson); or (4) widespread fear and panic (as with a school shooting) (p. 6-7). The safety of all is paramount.**

**Although the risk of a terrorist attack is less than the experiencing of local hazards, prepared schools can integrate the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Advisory System that signals increased threat. Its risk is sequential from lowest to highest risk: Low (green); Guarded (blue); Elevated (yellow); High (orange); and Severe (red). View a copy of a "Sample School Advisory System" in "Appendix E."**

## **Conclusion**

**This research review demonstrates the necessity of school crisis planning. School communities need to have a crisis management plan that includes prevention, preparedness, management, and resolution. The mottos, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and "Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst" are practical guidelines to follow.**

## Appendix A

### Mitigation and Prevention Action Checklist

- **Connect with community emergency responders to identify local hazards.**
- **Review the last safety audit to examine school buildings and grounds.**
- **Determine who is responsible for overseeing violence prevention strategies in your school.**
- **Encourage staff to provide input and feedback into the crisis planning process.**
- **Review incident data.**
- **Determine the major problems in your school with regard to student crime and violence.**
- **Assess how the school addresses these problems.**
- **Conduct an assessment to determine how these problems-as well as others-may impact your vulnerability to certain crises.**

**The U. S. Department of Education’s *Crisis Guide* that this researcher is integrating in this paper and in the five Appendices “is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, Washington, D.D., 2003.”**

## **Appendix B**

### **Preparedness Action Checklist**

**To review the comprehensiveness of the crisis plan, consider the items on the checklist below.**

- **Determine what crisis plans exist in the district, school, and community.**
- **Identify all stakeholders involved in crisis planning.**
- **Develop procedures for communicating with staff, students, families, and the media.**
- **Establish procedures to account for students during a crisis.**
- **Gather information that exists about the school facility, such as maps and the location of utility shutoffs.**
- **Identify the necessary equipment that needs to be assembled to assist staff in a crisis.**

## Appendix C

### Response Action Checklist

- **Determine if a crisis is occurring.**
- **Identify the type of crisis that is occurring and determine the appropriate response.**
- **Activate the incident management system.**
- **Ascertain whether on evacuation; reverse evacuation; lockdown; or shelter-in-place needs to be implemented.**
- **Maintain communication among all relevant staff at officially designated locations.**
- **Establish what information needs to be communicated to staff, students, families, and the community.**
- **Monitor how emergency first aid is being administered to the injured.**
- **Decide if more equipment and supplies are needed.**

## **Appendix D**

### **Recovery Action Checklist**

- **Strive to return to learning as quickly as possible.**
- **Restore the physical plant, as well as the school community.**
- **Monitor how staff are assessing students for the emotional impact of the crisis.**
- **Identify what follow up interventions are available to students, staff, and first responders.**
- **Conduct debriefings with staff and first responders.**
- **Assess curricular activities that address the crisis.**
- **Allocate appropriate time for recovery.**
- **Plan how anniversaries of events will be commemorated.**
- **Capture “lessons learned” and incorporate them into revisions and trainings.**

## Appendix E

### Sample School Advisory System



## Sample School Advisory System

Risk	Suggested Actions
<b>SEVERE</b> <i>(Red)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Follow local and/or federal government instructions (listen to radio/TV)</li> <li>▶ Activate crisis plan</li> <li>▶ Restrict school access to essential personnel</li> <li>▶ Cancel outside activities and field trips</li> <li>▶ Provide mental health services to anxious students and staff</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b> <i>(Orange)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assign staff to monitor entrances at all times</li> <li>▶ Assess facility security measures</li> <li>▶ Update parents on preparedness efforts</li> <li>▶ Update media on preparedness efforts</li> <li>▶ Address student fears concerning possible terrorist attacks</li> <li>▶ Place school and district crisis response teams on standby alert status</li> </ul>
<b>ELEVATED</b> <i>(Yellow)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Inspect school buildings and grounds for suspicious activities</li> <li>▶ Assess increased risk with public safety officials</li> <li>▶ Review crisis response plans with school staff</li> <li>▶ Test alternative communication capabilities</li> </ul>
<b>GUARDED</b> <i>(Blue)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review and upgrade security measures</li> <li>▶ Review emergency communication plan</li> <li>▶ Inventory, test, and repair communication equipment</li> <li>▶ Inventory and restock emergency supplies</li> <li>▶ Conduct crisis training and drills</li> </ul>
<b>LOW</b> <i>(Green)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assess and update crisis plans and procedures</li> <li>▶ Discuss updates to school and local crisis plans with emergency responders</li> <li>▶ Review duties and responsibilities of crisis team members</li> <li>▶ Provide CPR and first aid training for staff</li> <li>▶ Conduct 100% visitor ID check</li> </ul>

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