

## **When a Crisis Occurs:** **A Quick Reference Guide for Families**

A crisis or safety concern may occur at any time in our community or in neighboring communities. Children may be confused and/or frightened by the information they hear in conversations and in news reports and will look to adults for guidance as to how to react.

The following quick reference guide offers parents suggestions for establishing a sense of security and safety to help children cope with a crisis situation. Additionally, the school-based counselor, psychologist, and social worker are available to assist students.

Avoid euphemisms, such as “went to sleep and did not wake up,” “went away,” or “lost.” These may be taken literally and cause fear or misunderstanding.

- Provide emotional support
- Depending on the crisis, limit the amount of exposure your child has to the internet and televised news reports
- Be honest with your children about what has occurred and provide facts about what has happened. Use age appropriate terms for better understanding
- Encourage your child to talk to you about his or her feelings and concerns.
- Allow children to ask questions in order to clarify misperceptions and misunderstandings
- Repetitive discussion of the situation may traumatize or re-traumatize a child
- Reassure your child that he/she is safe
- Spend extra time with your child, especially doing something relaxing for both of you
- Watch for ongoing signs of difficulty which could indicate that your child may need additional help. Some warning signs are withdrawal from social contact, change in eating or sleeping habits, nightmare, and unusual clinging
- If you are concerned about your child(ren), contact your school support staff (school counselor, psychologist or social worker) or your healthcare provider