

# I-CART

## Indiana Crisis Assistance Response Team



### Recommendations for Working with Families and Communities

1. Supply them with accurate information as to what has happened and how the school is responding, i.e. letters to the parents.
2. Inform them that the school is responding with a planned crisis intervention and that this intervention is not counseling or therapy for children. Inform them that the school response is part of their school safety plan that each school district is required to have. Inform them of the goals of the intervention.
3. Always be prepared to provide a "Crisis Response" meeting for parents and or community in the evening.
  - Have handouts available (i.e. common reaction to loss; ways they can assist; suicide ideation; etc.)
  - Conduct a debriefing with them
  - Provide a brief over view of crisis responses
  - Inform them that they may be contacted if a child is viewed at risk
  - Assure them that the school will be monitoring behavior of children
  - Encourage them to share information with the school about their child
  - Make them aware of community resources
4. Let them know that you are aware that all members of a family, regardless of age and closeness to the event, can have a reaction
5. Be ready to inform the family about possible reactions that their child or they may have in the months to come. Thus, if these reactions present themselves, parents will not become over alarmed or think that there is something wrong with them or their child.

6. Identify family therapist, child therapists, trauma specialists and other community resources prior to an event.
7. Remind families that both individuals and families grieve in their own way and in their own time. For some, the normal grief period can be two years. Some will move through the grief period earlier others will take longer.
8. Be aware of cultural customs and differences. Help parents understand that the child may be confused by the different reactions of the home environment and the school or community environment.
9. Have a list of books, web sites or other resources that may be beneficial for the family.
10. Help the parent understand that grieving over any type of loss can be very hard work for a student and an adult alike. The grief that is shown may be directed at loss derived from a death, a serious illness, a traumatic event, a divorce, a change in economic status of the family, and/or a move.
11. Help the parent understand that reacting to a significant loss of any kind can impact all areas of the student's life: academic, social, physical, emotional, spiritual and behavioral.
12. Children and adults often revisit loss and experience a different type of grief as they move from one developmental stage to another.
13. Other information that may be beneficial for the parent to know:
  - Children tend to go in and out of grief
  - Not all children talk about their grief
  - Play is one way a child makes sense of his/her world. Do not be alarmed if a child 're-enacts the event' during play
  - After a death, children may fear that they or other loved ones might die
  - It is not uncommon for children to believe they have seen or heard the deceased person
  - Children need clear, honest explanations about death
  - Young children may be repetitive in their questions
  - Consistency and routines are important
  - Answer questions in a language that is appropriate for the child's age level and that they can understand

- Use concrete language and real words. . avoid euphemisms
- Allow children choices in terms of planning and being part of a funeral, memorial service, anniversaries, etc.
- Allow and encourage memorialization
- Don't tell a child you know how they feel or tell them what to do unless they ask for your advice

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