



Springtime Incident Response Plan Review

Good weather during the springtime offers a chance to practice your incident response procedures. Gene Hindle, Area Safety and Security Officer, DDESS, recommends that schools review emergency plans and protective action procedures. “You may want to make it a point of discussion at your next Crisis Management meeting. Talk about the general atmosphere in the school.” Additionally, Hindle encourages school administrators to “work through” all eventualities. “Last, but not least, run an exercise.” See page 3 of this newsletter for suggestions on how to improve crisis preparedness. ■

Administrators Respond Effectively to Natural Disaster

Administrators at Fort Rucker Elementary School and Fort Rucker Primary School responded effectively to the tornado that struck Enterprise, Alabama in March 2007. Although no DoDEA students were injured, some students had older siblings in the public high school that was severely damaged by the tornado.

Debbie Patton, principal of Fort Rucker Primary School, explained that continuing normal operations in the aftermath of an incident provides stability for students. Principal Patton said, “The best thing we can do for the soldiers is protect their children; the best thing we can do for the students is to proceed as normally as possible.” For additional tips on incident response planning for natural disasters refer to Chapter 2, page 2-10, in *DoDEA’s Safe Schools Handbook for Practitioners*. ■

Spring Break Travel Tips

Administrators can remind students traveling for spring break about tips for personal safety. The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs offers suggestions for visiting foreign locations safely, including:

- ▶ Wear conservative clothing to blend into the crowd; avoid U.S.A. insignia or clothing that identifies you as an American.
- ▶ Pack light; keep valuables with you and insert identification information inside your luggage.
- ▶ Do not discuss travel plans with strangers.
- ▶ Read Consular Information Sheets (public announcements/travel warnings) at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.



For further information visit the Office of Safety and Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm (on the right under “Security Resources” select “Safety and Security Tips”) or contact your District or Area Safety and Security Office. The U.S. Department of State Web site provides information for citizens traveling abroad. More information about traveling safely and acquiring passports or visas can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>. ■

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CDC Study: Teen Suicide Rates Increase

The February 2007 issue of the journal *Pediatrics* published an article on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Summary of Vital Statistics that revealed a dramatic increase in teenage suicide. After more than a decade of steadily decreasing teen suicide rates, the rate increased by 18.2 percent from 2003-2004.

Numerous doctors and other professionals at a CDC hearing in 2006 noted a rise in the suicide rate that has since been confirmed by the CDC study.



Some attribute this increase to the 20 percent decline in the number of anti-depressant prescriptions given to depressed students in 2004. After a spate of well-publicized teen suicides connected with anti-depressant use, the FDA required that these medications bear warning labels about the potential for suicidal thoughts. Yet, in spite of the decrease in consumption, the overall suicide rate climbed dramatically in 2004.

A second theory to explain the rise in the suicide rate is the national shortage of mental health experts for students. According to some estimates, one in four children is afflicted with some sort of mental health problem and only 25 percent of those receive any treatment. While girls are far more likely to consider suicide, boys are more likely to take action.

Regardless of the cause, it is essential for educators and parents to understand and recognize signs of depression in children. According to the NYU Child

Study Center, some of the suicide warning signs that educators and parents should be aware of include:

- ✓ Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- ✓ Marked personality changes, including anger, rebelliousness and withdrawal from friends.
- ✓ Increased tolerance for risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse or reckless driving.
- ✓ Overreactions to personal difficulties such as poor grades or romantic rejection.
- ✓ A decline in the quality of school work.
- ✓ Persistent boredom and/or lethargy.
- ✓ Neglect of personal appearance.
- ✓ Complaints about physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue.
- ✓ A pattern of giving away prized possessions.
- ✓ Intolerance of praise or rewards.
- ✓ Preoccupation with death in writing songs or poems.
- ✓ An increase in self-hate comments.

If you suspect a student is troubled or depressed, bring the situation to the attention of your school administrator or counselor. “Discussing the problem does not encourage the teenager to go through with the plan,” says Dr. Lori Evans, Ph.D., of the NYU Child Study Center. “On the contrary, it will help him or her know that someone is willing to be a friend.” When any student admits to having suicidal feelings, he or she should be taken seriously, monitored closely, and referred to mental health professionals for treatment.

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This is an unofficial publication produced by CSC on behalf of the Department of Defense Education Activity Office of Safety and Security. The material herein is presented for informational purposes and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense. All comments and questions should be directed to safeschools@csc.com.

Additional information on suicide prevention can be found at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/default.aspx. For a list of worldwide Samaritan suicide hotlines go to www.befrienders.org/. Page 6 of this newsletter discusses a suicide prevention program distributed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. For additional programs see the *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm. ■

“Mini” Role-Playing Simulation Improves Readiness

Discussing responses to potential incidents helps administrators think through how they would respond to a crisis. It is difficult for administrators to find time for crisis response training due to the academic demands on their schedules. However, during the DoDEA Safe Schools Training, Dr. Thelma Gibson, Principal of Hood Street Elementary School in Columbia, South Carolina, proposed an innovative way to include a limited training exercise in her monthly staff meeting.

Dr. Gibson suggested setting aside time at the end of the meeting to propose a situation to her staff and see how they would handle it. Ten to 15 minutes provide sufficient time for thinking through the specific actions to respond to a critical incident. Additionally, identifying who performs each task ensures that the staff will be able to execute their duties during a crisis situation. It also improves the ability of the staff to think flexibly to respond to a variety of situations.



The outline below could be used to conduct a discussion to help staff become familiar with their crisis response roles. To maximize the learning opportunity, invite emergency response officials from the military installation and representatives from the installation command to observe and participate in the discussion. The actions below could be used to lead a role-playing simulation.

- 1) Describe a hypothetical situation (i.e., the principal is out of the building and a fugitive with a weapon is seen attempting to enter the school).
- 2) Call on each member of the Crisis Team to describe what they would do (i.e., the second person in the school chain of command might state that they would give the signal for lockdown and alert emergency responders and the school district that the school was going into lockdown).
- 3) The members of the Crisis Team responsible for exterior doors in the halls and checking for students caught outside of class could describe their actions.
- 4) Call on a classroom teacher with no specific Crisis Team duties and ask him or her to describe how they would implement the lockdown actions.
- 5) The school counselor and parent liaison representative could describe any special actions required of them – depending on the situation.
- 6) The appropriate individual could then describe how they would handle communication with parents.

“We try to do reminders on school safety each month,” says Dr. Gibson. Even simple practices like those described above add value by bolstering the confidence of crisis team members. Those who drill on their response procedures are better able to manage their stress if an event occurs.

For additional information on crisis management refer to *DoDEA’s Safe Schools Handbook for Practitioners*, Chapter 2, pages 2-14 to 2-15. For technical assistance on leading discussions e-mail safeschools@csc.com. ■

How Cliques Affect Teenage Girls

Queen Bees & Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends & Other Realities of Adolescence, published in 2002, is not merely a helpful text for parents. The book provides useful information for educators and administrators on how to communicate effectively with teenage girls, and help them stay safe by learning about and avoiding dangerous situations such as aggressive teenage girl behavior and sexual harassment.

The author, Rosalind Wiseman, is a former teacher and the founder of the Empower Program, a not-for-profit organization that conducts workshops to help empower boys and girls to stop violence. She shares with readers the inner workings of what she terms “Girl World,” insights Wiseman gained through a decade of working closely with teenagers. Wiseman’s underlying thesis is that parents and educators have to be actively involved in all aspects of the lives of teenage girls in order to keep them safe. Accordingly, this book devotes a section of each chapter to teaching adults to communicate effectively.

Educators will find the discussion of the powerful role social dynamics play in so many aspects of girls’ lives particularly helpful. According to Wiseman, cliques influence each of the following behaviors in the lives of girls:

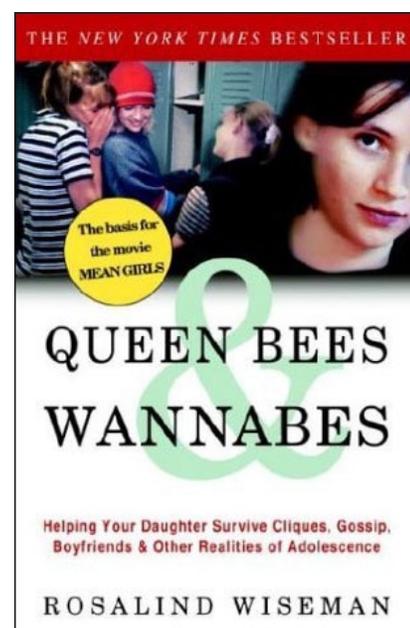
- ▶ Teasing and exclusivity.
- ▶ Gossip and other behaviors that damage self-esteem.
- ▶ Fashion choices.
- ▶ Use of alcohol and drugs.
- ▶ Decisions girls make about boys and sex.

As Wiseman explains how and why girls behave the way they do, she also gives practical advice for keeping them safe. She explains, for example, how to teach teenagers to use the buddy system and to check in with one another at parties to reduce the possibility of dating violence.

Wiseman offers an extensive list of hundreds of books, both fiction and non-fiction, and popular films that can be used to facilitate discussions with teenage girls about personal safety. The book is filled with checklists and useful advice that cover topics such as:

- ▶ How to tell if teens are planning an illicit party.
- ▶ Why adults should not tolerate bad language from teenagers.
- ▶ Why trying to be the “cool” adult is bound to fail.
- ▶ How to tell if a girl is in an abusive relationship (romantic or otherwise). See page 6 of the September 2006 newsletter for a description of *Dating and Violence Should Never Be a Couple* – a dating violence prevention program distributed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The newsletter is available from the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm.
- ▶ The types of drugs teenagers can obtain most easily, and how they do it.
- ▶ Why teenagers lie to adults.

Additionally, the book includes short sections written by teens, which offer insight into communicating with adolescents. The book even includes lists of taboo words that are sure to shut-down any conversation. A follow-on text, *Queen Bee Moms & Kingpin Dads* was released in March 2006. For additional information visit Wiseman’s Web site at www.rosalindwiseman.com. ■



Sexual Harassment Prevention for Elementary Schools

Sexual Harassment is not limited to middle and high schools. It can and does happen in elementary schools as well. Although national statistics are hard to find, the following are illustrative:

- ▶ A Department of Education survey of violence in public schools conducted in 2000 found 650 incidents of sexual battery other than rape occurring in 520 elementary schools across the country.
- ▶ According to *Hostile Hallways*, a 2001 study undertaken by the American Association for University Women, “Students most often experience sexual harassment for the first time during sixth to ninth grade, but some instances occur before third grade.”

Finding age-appropriate prevention programs can be difficult. Most sexual harassment prevention programs are written for older students and can be difficult to adapt for younger children. However, two programs co-authored by Nan Stein, Ph.D., can easily be combined and adapted to form an effective sexual harassment prevention program for elementary schools. Dr. Stein is a former middle school teacher and is presently a senior research scientist at the Wellesley Center for Women at Wellesley College.

Bullyproof: A Teacher’s Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students, published in 1996, was evaluated in a three-year CDC study in Austin, Texas and has been adapted by Austin schools for use in fifth grade sexual harassment prevention programs. The program helps students build a vocabulary about the devastating effects bullying can have on others. Some of the 11 sequential lessons deal with the gendered dimensions of bullying, and are designed to teach students the differences between bullying and teasing. Results from the evaluation study confirmed that students in the intervention schools showed greater accuracy over time in identifying behaviors that constituted sexual harassment.

Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher’s Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6 through 12), was published by the National Education Association in 1994. This curriculum contains classroom lessons, handouts, and quizzes, some of which are appropriate for younger children. Together these programs can provide a framework for students to discuss what constitutes sexual harassment, how it hurts, and why it is unacceptable in any environment.

Regardless of which prevention program administrators choose, any serious effort to keep schools free of sexual harassment must involve a systemic, multidimensional approach that uses long-term educational strategies. According to the National Association of State Boards of Educators (NASBE), these include:

- ▶ A strong anti-harassment statement that clearly defines sexual harassment.
- ▶ Recognizing and responding to sexual harassment.
- ▶ A climate of non-gendered education, respect, and cooperation among students.
- ▶ Encouraging students to report sexual harassment.
- ▶ Planning and carrying out appropriate disciplinary action.



For DODEA’s student sexual harassment policy, refer to DoDEA Regulation 1005.1: *Administrator’s Manual*, section 15.8, at http://www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/1005_1.pdf. NASBE also offers extensive guidelines for sexual harassment prevention at www.nasbe.org/Educational_issues/Reports/Sexual%20Harrass.pdf. Both of Dr. Stein’s curriculum guides are available at www.wcwonline.org/o-browse.php. For additional ideas on sexual harassment prevention programs see the *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* available from the Office of Safety and Security at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm. ■

SOS Signs of Suicide

SOS Signs of Suicide is a nationally recognized prevention program provided to DoDEA by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This program, developed by Screening for Mental Health, Inc., helps protect students by identifying those who may be at risk for mental health problems and encouraging help-seeking and appropriate treatment. Through the SOS middle school and high school programs, students, school staff, and their parents will learn about depression, suicide, and the associated risks of alcohol use.



The SOS program gives young people a “depression check-up” as well as knowledge that will enable them to recognize depression and respond effectively. The program also highlights the relationship between depression and suicide. SOS participants learn that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression. SOS teaches the steps individuals should take if they recognize the warning signs of depression or suicide. The program summarizes these help-seeking steps with the acronym **ACT: Acknowledge** you are seeing serious signs of depression or suicide; let the person know that you **Care** about him or her; and **Tell** a trusted adult — either with your friend, or on his or her behalf. The SOS program goals include:

- ◆ Decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression among students.
- ◆ Encourage individual help-seeking and help-seeking on behalf of a friend.
- ◆ Link suicide to mental illness that, like physical illness, requires treatment.
- ◆ Engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention.
- ◆ Reduce the stigma associated with suicide and depression by including these topics in the health curriculum.
- ◆ Increase access to mental health services for youth and their families.
- ◆ Encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to address issues associated with student mental health with stakeholders who share the mission to reduce youth suicide.
- ◆ Help youth understand that depression is a treatable illness.
- ◆ Encourage peer-to-peer and student-to-parent communication about the ACT help-seeking message.

The SOS programs for middle and high schools each include an age-appropriate video which creates a supportive and responsive atmosphere for those youth who may be at-risk for depression or suicide. Each video also includes opportunities to discuss topics of youth depression and suicide. Each SOS Signs of Suicide kit includes educational videos, training videos for school staff, depression screening and scoring forms with instructions, posters and post cards, and “postvention” guidelines for schools.

The SOS program was developed with assistance from the National Association of School Psychologists, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and others. A study published in 2004 by the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that the SOS High School Suicide Prevention Program reduced suicide attempts by 40 percent in high school students exposed to the program. More information about the Signs of Suicide program can be found at www.mentalhealthscreening.org. For additional suicide prevention programs see the *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm. ■