

**RESPONSE TO GRIEF
CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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Definition and Purpose

Clearly, the purpose behind every crisis management plan is the safety, health, and well-being of persons supported and staff. Thus, when needed, adjustment training centers must be prepared to respond to situations of crisis with appropriate and timely reactions.

As stated earlier, this document focuses on responses to grief; however, there are many other “crises” that adjustment training centers will need to deal with. This includes death of a person supported, staff member, or member of a person supported’s immediate family. In addition, many other situations can be perceived as a “crisis” or “critical incident” such as natural disasters, fire, etc. Whatever the situation, adjustment training center staff need to make the decision of how to respond.

Not included in this document are two forms that would be helpful. These documents include a calling tree and a special skills tree. The calling tree, which is often used during inclement weather, is also useful during crisis situations to pass along important bits of information. Secondly, it is helpful to keep a list of staff that have special skills that are useful in crisis situations. For example, those with emergency medical training, bi-lingual education, and knowledge of sign language should be noted and on file as part of the master crisis plan.

Information on Grief

Understanding Grief Reactions of Persons Supported

A variety of reactions can be assumed when a person supported becomes informed of a death. It is certainly possible that the person supported may experience a combination of reactions.

Possible reactions include:

Guilt – This is a common reaction because individuals often feel guilty about last interactions, not being nicer to their loved one, etc. Persons supported may also have “wished the deceased would go away” and thus, they somehow believe they are responsible for the death. If the individual was in no way responsible for the death, it is

- € Disbelief of the death
- € Denial of the activity
- € Sadness

Length of Grieving

No specific timelines should be discussed in regard to the length of grieving. A number of factors will affect how the grieving proceeds such as method of the death, circumstances, etc. Typically the length of time it takes to adjust to a death or loss is significantly underestimated and unrecognized.

Support and sensitivity to persons supported who have experienced a death or loss should exist for at least the first year after the death. It is common for the bereaved to experience reminders of the death, such as the “first holiday season”, or the “first spring”, etc. Other time periods of significance include three months, six – nine months, 12 months, and 18 months following a loss.

Grief Triggers

3. Provide assurance that there are those who can help.
4. Be patient with the person supported grieving.

Communicating Information about Death

- € Use words that you think he or she might understand.
- € Be honest, open, and direct.
- € Use phrases that don't have multiple meanings.
- € Answer questions honestly.
- € Use examples that the person may have already experienced.
- € Use concrete images, while avoiding abstract concepts. For example, say, "Do you remember how sick Grandma looked when we saw her last week? The doctors were not able to help her get better and she died".
- € Use multiple ways to communicate to increase chances of gaining an

Do not force, but encourage the person to attend the appropriate activities, such as the visitation, wake, funeral, memorial service, and burial. This should happen after the purpose of the [] and a description of how the body will look has been explained. The use of movies, books, and pictures can be helpful in explaining the situation. When choosing teaching tools such as movies, books, and pictures, extreme care should be used in the education process.

If possible, videotape the funeral or memorial service. Thus, if the person supported chooses or is unable to attend the service, they can watch the process during a time in which they are ready. As with the previous recommendation, care should be used if this

outside of the box can show how the person supported is showing their feelings on the outside.

If the person supported has a difficult m

Activities to Move Beyond Grief

In honor of the person who died, plant a tree or other living item as a memorial.

Helpful Hints for Facilitating Discussions

Goals for Group Discussion

Provide persons supported with an opportunity to begin expressing their reactions to the loss and gain support from others

- € Identify persons supported who seem especially distressed and refer to crisis team members

Key Points about Person Supported Reactions

Persons supported will experience a wide range of emotions and each person has a unique response to crisis

- € There is no "right" way to grieve
- € Talking about feelings is an appropriate way of expressing grief

Ways to Help a Person Supported Experiencing Grief

1. Use terms such as "died, dead, death" rather than phrases like "passed away", avoiding cliché's or easy answers. Straightforward, gentle use of the words help

Helpful Hints for Guardians/Parents of Grieving Persons Supported

When a tragedy happens, parents/guardians play a key role in helping their person supported move through the grieving process. Listed below are some suggestions and information that may be helpful to you as you support your person supported.

1. The person supported should be told what has happened quietly, simply, and directly. Unnecessary details should not be offered, but all questions should be answered.
2. Parents/guardians should not be afraid to speak about feelings and emotions. If this is difficult try this, "I know what has happened and I know it might be hard for you. It is important that we talk so I know you are going to be OK".
3. If the person supported wishes to merely sit, his/her wishes should be respected.
4. The single most important message to relay to the person supported is you are not alone, I am with you.
- 5.

Example of a Response to Grief Crisis Management Team and Plan

A variety of members are responsible for crisis management and implementation at the local level. Critical of any team is the support and sharing of responsibility of duties. In addition, collaborative decisions are of great importance to provide appropriate services during times of crisis.

Specific duties of a crisis management team are listed below:

Core Crisis Team Members

The Day of the Crisis

During the Crisis

President/CEO's Duties and Responsibilities

Notify all members of the core crisis team that the President/CEO is the sole spokesperson for the adjustment training center regarding the crisis and that all media inquiries and community questions be directed to the President/CEO. Likewise, all team members are to notify all staff that the President/CEO is the sole spokesperson.

To be Completed at the 7:00 a.m. (or at a Time Designated by the President/CEO) Core Crisis Team Meeting

1. Present all known factual details of the crisis to the core crisis team with law enforcement assistance.
2. Develop a log of all activities and actions.
3. Have ample copies of the adjustment training center's crisis management plan available.
4. Provide copies of the specific duties and responsibilities for ea

Vice President/Financial Officer's Duties and Responsibilities

1. Ensuring that all appropriate staff are in attendance for the 7:30 a.m. (or at a different time) general meeting describing the crisis and the actions to be taken.
2. Ensuring that all support staff understand that the President/CEO is the sole spokesperson for the adjustment training center when inquiries are made by the media, visitors, or community members.
3. Ensuring that all staff have copies of the following correspondences:
 - € President/CEO's letter to parents/guardians
 - € Staff announcement
 - € Staff response to persons supported
 - € Staff response to visitors
 - € Secretarial response to phone inquiries
 - € Media parameter policy
4. Designating specific rooms/areas in the building for mental health support to be assigned for the purpose of providing counseling to persons supported, staff, and community members.
5. Ensuring that all visiting personnel have identification **NAME TAGS**. Individuals without identification name tags must report to the main office.
6. Informing appropriate staff that there will be a meeting at the end of the work day with the core crisis team to review the overall effectiveness of the adjustment training center's actions and to address additional concerns.
7. Assisting the President/CEO in the dissemination of information and coordinating the actions proposed by the Core Crisis team.
8. Contacting the funeral director or ministerial group regarding funeral arrangements.

Service/Program Coordinator(s) Duties and Responsibilities

1. Ensuring that all mental health staff are introduced to the core crisis team and to all appropriate staff.

4. Assigning selected mental health staff to specific buildings/areas adversely affected by the crisis to aid staff in making announcements regarding the crisis and assisting the staff as they help persons supported cope with the crisis.
5. Establishing a communications system with all staff in identifying individuals in need of immediate counseling services. This will be accomplished by requiring all staff to write the names of individuals they feel are in need of counseling services, on a sheet of paper, and giving it to one of the program coordinators at a central location.
6. Working directly with the ministerial group in providing counseling services during the work day and arranging for after hours counseling services and other support services.
7. Assisting the ministerial group in identifying persons supported, staff, and parents/guardians, adversely affected by the crisis for additional counseling and support outside the adjustment training center setting.
8. Determining the need and extent of on-going counseling services after the crisis subsides.
9. Notifying the persons supported regarding the funeral arrangements.

Ministerial Group/Pastoral Support Person Duties and Responsibilities

1. Working closely with the program coordinators in providing counseling services to persons supported, staff, and community members adversely affected by the crisis.
2. Providing individual and group counseling services for persons supported and family members, and community members adversely affected by the crisis outside the work setting.
3. Working directly with the President/CEO to develop an appropriate plan if a funeral is to be held on a work day, including making arrangements for staff that plan to attend.
4. Working directly with the program coordinators to arrange for a common location for persons supported to gather before or after the funeral to share and discuss their feelings and needs.
5. Help in making the wishes and desires of the family known to the adjustment training center and likewise advising the family of the actions proposed by the adjustment training center.
6. Working directly with the family/guardian and staff regarding the return of any personal items that the adjustment training center may have in its possession.

7. When appropriate, providing counseling services at the church setting, during the work day, for persons supported with the approval of the administration.

Nursing/Medical Director's Duties and Responsibilities

Review at the 7:30 a.m. (or designated time) meeting with staff and persons supported the feelings and reactions or behaviors which might be expected following the specific crisis (e.g. Disbelief, Anger, Denial, Sadness, and Loss).

1. Review at the same meeting how staff and community members should respond to the reactions and behaviors listed above and recommend approaches and strategies they should use with persons supported.
2. Encourage all employees and community members to extend mutual support for each other and assure them that it is okay to openly express feelings and concerns.
3. Notify all staff that support counseling services are available and that program coordinators will assist them in making announcements to persons supported and help them with persons supported adversely affected by the crisis.
4. Provide technical assistance to mental health staff as they provide counseling services for persons supported, staff, and community members.
5. Work directly with the ministerial group and program coordinator in establishing communications between the family adversely affected by the crisis and adjustment training center.

Duties and Responsibilities for Residential Living Supervisor Closest to the Crisis

Persons supported's emotions vary depending upon their emotional strength, understanding, temperament, and prior experience with a crisis. Most persons supported have experienced tragedy or loss, while all experiences are unique to them.

In addition to emotional differences among persons supported, the proximity to the crisis and the person supported's direct involvement to persons affected, all have an effect on emotional responses. Just as persons supported vary, so too will the circumstances and seriousness of the loss or tragedy.

While certainly not inclusive, the following guidelines will enable staff to respond to crisis situations and meet the needs of many persons supported.

The staff member with the best relationship should inform the persons supported of the incident/death/crisis by telling them the factual information. Information should be provided by the President/CEO. In sharing this information, keep in mind the following suggestions:

- a. Use a statement such as “I have some sad news to tell you”.
- b. Suggest talking in a quiet place.
- c. Ask the person if there is someone they would like to have present.
- d. Allow the person to react in a manner that helps them cope and absorb the news as long as they are not a danger to themselves or others.

1.

Following the Crisis

Specific Action

1. Crisis Core Team:

Should remain organized and continue to function as in the first day after the crisis. The decision to continue with the **before** and **after** [school] meetings with employees shall be decided by the core crisis team. As a general rule, these meetings should fade-out as the crisis subsides.

2. Administrators:

Notification Statement for Staff during Work Hours

To: All Staff
From: Vice President/Chief Financial Officer
Date:
Re: Death of Person Supported or Employee

I regret to inform you of the death of _____. According to information provided by the medical examiner and the family, _____ died from _____ at _____ on _____. I know that for those of you who knew _____ personally, the next few days will be especially difficult.

The crisis team has already convened and arranged an emergency staff meeting for today at _____ (am/pm) in _____. It is imperative that we respond collectively as a team to meet the needs of our persons supported, so attendance is mandatory.

Attached is a copy of the information about the death to be read aloud to your persons supported.

We know it is helpful to begin processing such tragic news immediately, so we encourage you to allow ample time for persons supported to process this news. Attached is a handout with activities that might be helpful.

Media relations during such an event are especially sensitive. The center's designated spokesperson is _____ and I ask that you refer all media-related questions to _____ at _____ or myself at _____. Our goal is to meet the needs of our persons supported and avoid sensationalizing _____'s death. Equally important is that we ensure those who would like additional support with this sad news, please contact _____, our crisis team leader, at _____, or _____, our outside agency referral at _____. All information is kept confidential.

Thank you for your patience and teamwork during this difficult time. We will provide you with additional information during the emergency meeting at the end of the day in room _____ at _____. In the mean time, please see with any questions or concerns.

**Example Notification Statement for Staff
(evenings and weekends)**

To: All Staff
From: Vice President/Chief Financial Officer
Date:
Re: Death

I regret to inform you of the death of _____. According to information provided by the medical examiner and the family, _____ died from _____ at _____ on _____.

Funeral arrangements are as follows: _____.

The crisis team has already convened and arranged an emergency staff meeting for _____ at _____. It is imperative that we respond as a collective team to meet the needs of the persons supported. Attendance is mandatory.

We know it is helpful to begin processing such tragic news immediately, so we encourage you to allow ample time for persons supported to process this news. Attached is a handout with guidelines for facilitating discussion with your persons supported. If you would like additional assistance, please see _____ in room _____ and a crisis team member will help in your persons supported.

Media relations during such an event are especially sensitive. The designated spokesperson is _____ and I ask that you refer all media-related questions to _____ at _____ or myself at _____. Our goal is to meet the needs of our persons supported. Equally important is that we ensure the wellness of each other during this crisis so we can best serve the needs of our persons supported. For those who would like additional support with this sad news, please contact _____, our crisis team leader, at _____ or _____, our outside agency referral at _____. All information is kept confidential.

Thank you for your patience and teamwork during this difficult time. We will provide you with additional information as it becomes available. Please feel free to contact _____ at _____ or myself at _____ with any further questions and concerns.

Example Notification Statement for Persons Supported

I have some sad news to share with you today. As some of you may already know, _____, a person supported/staff member here at _____, died at _____, on _____.

This tragedy will affect each of us differently. Some may respond immediately and recover quite quickly, while others may need several days or weeks to process their feelings of loss. We ask that each of you be respectful of each other and be tolerant, civil, and supportive. As we learn more about the events that may have contributed to _____'s death, we will share them with you.

Before we begin with our normal routine today, I want to take some time to talk about _____'s death. Does anyone have any questions or thoughts to share right now?

Notification for Media
(Formal Statement and Response to Incoming Calls)

Formal Statement

_____ (Adjustment Training Center) is sad to report that it has confirmed the death of one of its persons supported/staff members, _____ with the medical examiner's office and the deceased's family. _____ (name) died _____ (day).

He/she was a resident of _____, and was active at the adjustment training center. Funeral arrangements are not available at this time. Counselors and community mental health representatives are available to anyone who wishes to talk about _____'s death.

Response to Incoming Calls

The adjustment training center has designated a media spokesperson. Please feel free to contact _____ with your questions and concerns. We would like to respond to your questions in an organized manner. To assist you, _____, will be meeting with concerned members of the media at _____, in _____ (place). At that time we will provide information about the adjustment training center's response to our loss and identify additional resources in the community to support the bereaved.

Notification Letter to Parents or Guardian

To: Parents & Guardians
From: President/CEO
Date:
Re: Person supported/Staff Death

We are writing to inform you of the death of _____, a _____ (person supported/staff member) here at _____. He/She died on _____ as a result of _____. We have prepared the enclosed handouts to assist our persons supported, parents, and staff in dealing with their sense of loss. Information on the grieving process and other reactions is supplied in the handouts.

The visitation for _____ will be on _____ at _____ (am/pm) at _____ (place). Funeral services will be on _____ at _____ (am/pm) at _____ (place). A memorial will be held for persons supported on _____ at _____ (place).

If you feel your person supported is having difficulties dealing with this loss and may benefit from additional support, please feel free to contact _____, the Crisis Team Leader, or myself, so the adjustment training center

Media Parameters during a Crisis Situation

To be a hand-out to all media, teachers, support staff, and any other individuals identified by the President/CEO.

The following media parameters shall be in effect during a crisis situation:

1. No persons supported shall be interviewed within the adjustment training center premises.
2. No cameras, video equipment, or recording devices shall be allowed within the adjustment training center buildings.
3. **All**