



Resources for Supporting Students, Families, and School Staff After a Tragic Event

It is important that students, families, and school staff feel safe in their schools and communities. Following a tragic event, it may be challenging for a school to maintain and foster feelings of safety. To assist schools during these challenging times, we have compiled these best-practice recommendations and resources schools may consider using.

Recommendations for supporting students, families, and school staff

The American School Counselor Association and National Association of School Psychologists have provided the following recommendations:

- Try and keep routines as normal as possible. Children (and adults) gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Reassure children that they are safe and that schools are safe places.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.
- Families and adults need to first deal with and assess their own responses to crisis and stress.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.
- Help children identify at least one adult at school to whom they should go if they feel threatened or at risk.
- Observe children’s emotional state. Some children may not express their concerns verbally.
- Make time to talk and listen to children’s fears and concerns. Keep explanations age-appropriate:
 - Early elementary school: Provide brief, simple information balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them.
 - Upper elementary and early middle school: Children this age may have more questions and need more reassurances about what is being done at their school.
 - Upper middle school and high school students: Emphasize the role that students play in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (such as reporting threats to school safety) and communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators.

Please visit the [Helping Students After a School Shooting website](#) or [Talking to Children About Violence website](#) for additional information and resources from the American School Counselor Association.

If you or someone you know is struggling with feelings of distress or despair, we encourage you to contact the Montana Warm Line for help: 1-877-688-3377. You may also search for mental health supports in your area using [Montana 211](#) (dial 2-1-1) or the [Montana Bright App](#)

Resources of Immediate Response & Support

- [Talking to Children about the Shooting](#)- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- [What is Child Traumatic Stress?](#)- National Center for School Safety
- [Returning to School After a Crisis](#)- National Center for School Safety
- [Educator Self-care Resources](#)- Office of Public Instruction
- [Montana Crisis Services](#)- Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

Resources for Long-term Support & Prevention

- [Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit](#)- National Center for School Safety
- [Dealing with Grief and Loss in Adolescents](#)- Office of Public Instruction Teacher Learning Hub
- [Early Warning System](#)- Office of Public Instruction
- [Safe and Supportive Schools](#)- Office of Public Instruction
- [School Violence Prevention](#)- Office of Public Instruction

Please visit the [Coordinated School Health website](#) for more information.