

**Boulder Valley School District  
Education Center**

# **Crisis Management Plan**

**2008-09**



**6500 Arapahoe Road, Boulder, Colorado**

**Boulder Valley School District Education Center  
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**Dr. Chris King, Superintendent**

I hereby approve this plan and certify this Crisis Management Plan meets the guidelines and requirements set forth by the Boulder Valley School District Crisis Management Plan and Boulder Valley School District School Board Policy.

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Joe Sleeper  
Assistant Superintendent of Operational Services

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August 4, 2008

# Introduction

Families expect and trust Boulder Valley School District to keep their children safe during the day. The efforts of our staff, in support of our teachers, principals, and other staff help our schools meet those expectations.

This edition of the Crisis Management Plan for Boulder Valley School District has been developed to provide a foundation for successful crisis mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Based on a template that was reviewed and revised by a collaborative group of BVSD school administrators, local Emergency Managers, Fire Departments and local Law Enforcement Agencies, this plan reflects the latest “best thinking” gleaned from research. The Boulder Valley School District is committed to continuous improvement in all areas of the district.

## Why a Crisis Management Plan?

The scope and intensity of crises facing schools and school districts range in scope and intensity from incidents that affect a single student to ones that impact an entire community.

Crises affect schools can happen before, during or after school and on or off school campuses. A student injury at school, a threatening message scrawled on a bathroom wall, or a student who does not arrive home at the expected time after school can all be defined as a crisis.

More intense crises include natural disasters such as floods, fires or tornadoes that can strike a school and community with little or no warning. School shootings, threatened or actual, are extremely rare but have struck two school districts in Colorado with horrific results. Other crises that communities across the country are struggling to

understand and avert include infectious disease pandemics and acts of terror.

Knowing what to do during a crisis can be the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, even between life and death. A good example is a school with 350 children aged five to 12 years old is regularly evacuated within three to five minutes during a fire drill. While there are fires in schools every year, there is minimal damage to life and property because staff and students are prepared and regularly practice what to do in case of a fire.

This preparedness can be extended to the other risks schools face. The key to successful crisis management and mitigation is a trained crisis response team that understands its roles and responsibilities.

The purpose of Boulder Valley School District’s crisis management plan is to:

- To provide crisis management support and guidance to the schools in the Boulder Valley School District,
- Maintain student and staff safety,
- Provide staff with procedures to follow before, during and after a crisis situation,
- Provide processes for effective and appropriate communication.

**“Crisis management is a continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised. Good plans are never finished.”**

(US Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, revised January 2007).

### **What is a Crisis?**

According to Webster's Ninth Collegiate dictionary, a crisis is, "An unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome."

A crisis is a situation where school leaders must make one or more crucial decisions, even when faced with inadequate information, too little time, and insufficient resources.

In addition to fire, weather events, serious vandalism, or other crises resulting in physical damages, a crisis may be related to a serious injury, death, or other emotional trauma. The crisis could range from that which could have a profound or negative affect for an individual student, or may affect a significant portion of the school population.

### **Crisis Management and Communications Policies, Regulations and Guidelines**

Boulder Valley School District Education Center shall maintain the District Crisis Management Plan, reflecting similar actions and protocols described in

school crisis management plans and school board policies, including policies: EBCA, EBCA-R  
EBCB  
EBCC, EBCC-R  
EBCD, EBCD-R  
ECA, ECA-R  
ECAA, ECAA-R.

### **The crisis response plan shall address specific situations, including:**

- Bomb Threat
- Civil disturbance
- Dangerous animals
- Death of student or staff
- Explosion/site collapse
- Fire
- Flash flood
- Hazardous materials spill
- Kidnapping/suspected kidnapping
- Medical Injury
- Natural gas
- Severe weather
- Sexual assault
- Student demonstration
- Tornado
- Trespassing
- Weapons
- Lockout/ Lockdown

## Mitigation & Prevention

While the Boulder Valley School District Education Center may not have control over some of the hazards that may adversely affect it or our schools, we can take some actions to minimize or mitigate the impact of such incidents by taking certain steps to improve the climate and culture of our school.

**Mitigation** is defined as measures implemented to reduce or eliminate the occurrence or impact of a crisis. FEMA notes the goal of mitigation is to decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability.

Mitigating emergencies is also important from a legal standpoint. If a school district does not take appropriate good faith actions, it could be vulnerable to outside criticism or litigation.

**Prevention** is defined as implementation of plans and/or processes that enable Boulder Valley School District schools to avoid or preclude the occurrence of a crisis. Prevention tasks include compliance with school board policy and mitigation strategies and programs to support prevention, deterrence and detection. It is important to make efforts to ensure the physical plant meets local codes, as well as federal and state laws.

### Relationships are imperative

Some school crises will require response and support from school district, local and state emergency responders. The Boulder Valley School District staff has cultivated relationships with local emergency responders, and works closely with all BVSD staff to ensure good relationships and a common understanding of processes exist.

In addition:

- Local law enforcement agencies may use our schools as a practice site for their training programs.
- Local fire jurisdictions conduct regular fire inspections of BVSD schools, following up with a written inspection report.
- Principals have cultivated relationships with School Resource Officers (SROs) and consider them to be integral members of the school.

BVSD schools have curricula and programs aimed at preventing children and youth from initiating or engaging in harmful behaviors. Social problem-solving or life skills programs, anti-bullying programs, and school wide discipline efforts help reduce violent behavior.

Each student enrolled at Boulder Valley School District is informed of their rights and responsibilities via the Student Rights and Responsibility Handbook.

In addition to these established student responsibilities, schools use several programs to help students achieve those expectations, including programs that address violence prevention, bullying, conflict management and anonymous reporting of potential threats.

## Curricula and Programs, continued

In addition to those programs, the Boulder Valley School District also participates in:

- Gang Prevention Task Force
- Safe2 Tell
- Crimestoppers
- MACS

### Safe2Tell



Safe2Tell allows students, teachers, parents, or anyone else to call a toll free Colorado statewide hot line with information about a crime that has already happened, or one they fear may happen. The report is completely anonymous: your name is not required to stop a crime or abuse from happening.

To remain anonymous call 1-877-542-SAFE (7233). You can make a difference. To visit

their web site for more information, use the link below.

**Safe2Tell Web Site**

## Hazard Identification & Assessment

Before mitigation and prevention actions can be fully developed and implemented, the hazards on a school's campus and the surrounding area must be identified and assessed.

As part of our planning process, Boulder Valley School District Education Center considered the hazards we may face. Some are be obvious, such as tornadoes, floods, snow or ice storms, or fires. We have included in our hazard assessment our schools' proximity to potential hazards in the immediate neighborhood and the surrounding community.

We use annual hazard assessments to:

- Review and revise existing plans to be sure they are up to date.
- Identify hazards that require mitigation or prevention strategies. (Note: that some hazards cannot be mitigated and that others may be too costly to mitigate.)
- Develop required hazard mitigation or prevention strategies and/or response plans.
- Train the Building Crisis Response Team and staff on new plans and processes as appropriate.

Several hazard assessment forms are used to identify potential issues. Those assessment tools are located in the *Emergency Operations Plan* section.

# Preparedness

## Plan Orientation and Testing

In order to be effective, crisis response programs require training and practice. Each school year, Boulder Valley School District Education provides **Orientation Training** to the District Crisis Response Team, Building Crisis Response Team Leaders and other staff who may be involved with, or affected by, a crisis.

### **Orientation Exercises:**

All Boulder Valley School District Education Center staff who may be involved in drills or emergency responses, at any level, must attend orientation and workshops to learn procedures and their roles and responsibilities. An *orientation exercise* presents basic information about the emergency plan and allows discussion and clarification in an informal, low stress setting.

The two methods for testing the emergency response plans are ***Tabletop Exercises*** and ***Drills***.

### **Tabletop Training:**

A *Tabletop Exercise* is a simulation activity, discussed during a meeting dedicated solely to this function, in which a certain scenario is presented in parts and each crisis response team member describes their response roles, responsibilities and activities.

Tabletop exercises have proven to be helpful when revisions of plan is put in place, and near the start of each school year, before more widespread training of students or drills are conducted.

### **Drills:**

*Drills* are done to provide field experience for those managing the response to, and those affected by, a single crisis situation and response. Drills are designed to familiarize staff and students with the duties and/or behaviors expected of them during a critical incident.

Evaluation of the efficacy of the response plans is a part of every drill. Each drill is also documented and reported to the BVSD offices.

In addition, the District Crisis Response Team conducts a brief **after action review** of activities that have taken place during a crisis response. That review is intended to identify what went well, and identify steps to be taken for improvement.

# Preparedness

## Training and Drills

On-going training and practice is essential to effective crisis response and mitigating or preventing unwanted results. It is through practice that the response team will develop the high level of response skill and confidence to ensure the best decisions and actions are taken during a crisis.

Benefits of conducting crisis response training, testing and drills include:

- Improved understanding of roles and responsibilities for the Building Crisis Response Team (BCRT)
- Increased BCRT and staff familiarity with incident response processes
- Valuable student and staff experience and practice in a safe environment
- Improved team development, preparedness, performance and communication
- An opportunity to revise plans when problem areas are brought to light

Students participate in basic drills such as fire evacuation, tornado, lockdowns and lockouts to help them understand the processes and the behaviors expected from them during these situations.

These drills were selected because many of the processes, actions and skills learned apply to several different potential crisis situations. For example:

- A bomb threat may require a building evacuation, as would a fire, or a hazardous material spill inside the building.
- A lockout, used when a low level potential threat from outside occurs, could apply to a civil disturbance in the neighborhood, a wild animal on the grounds of the school, or a bank robbery several blocks from the school.

Practice of response drills for a school violence incident is also imperative, but must be done thoughtfully. While such events seem to be occurring more frequently, practicing the response to an event may cause emotional trauma to certain students that can disrupt the teaching and learning environment for those individuals.

Boulder Valley School District uses thoughtful caution when practicing responses to school violence; the specific situation practiced may not be shared with students in order to avoid the potential for trauma, but is known to the Building Crisis Response Team and other staff.

Guidelines for conducting Orientation, Tabletop Exercises, and Drills are described in the Training section.

# Response

## The Crisis Response Team Model

The BVSD Crisis Response Team model is designed to enable personnel to respond quickly and effectively to crisis situations that affect the school or school district. The model is comprised of:

- Building Crisis Response Teams
- The District Crisis Response Team
- Public Emergency Response Agencies

### NIMS and ICS

BVSD and Boulder Valley School District Education Center recognizes the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) as the common command structure used by all federal, state, and local emergency responders.

The **National Incident Management System (NIMS)** provides a flexible organizational structure that helps responders work together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents regardless of the size, cause or complexity of the crisis.

The **Incident Command System (ICS)** is a standardized command and control system used to coordinate the actions taken by individual emergency response agencies and organizations.

Recognizing that establishment of a unified command may be required during times of significant crisis; Boulder

Valley School District has adopted NIMS and the ICS to facilitate improved coordination and communication within the organization, and with the public emergency response agencies, when needed. This system is designed to provide clear lines of authority and communications needed for the effective and timely flow of information during crisis response and recovery.

### Building Crisis Response Team

Boulder Valley School District Education Center has formed a District Crisis Response Team (DCRT) using the Incident Command System Format.

At Boulder Valley School District Education Center, Joe Sleeper is the Incident Commander. Other DCRT members have received training in the ICS, training that is specifically geared to schools.

At Boulder Valley Schools, the school Principal is typically named as the Incident Commander. The principal is responsible to identify members of the Building Crisis Response Team and ensure they have received the basic ICS training.

### Through ICS, the Incident Commander is able to:

- Delegate responsibility
- Maintain span of control
- Preserve the unity of command
- Protect the safety of emergency responders, students, and staff

**Training Courses:** Two online FEMA courses are required for Crisis Team Members:

- IS-100.SC Introduction to the Incident Command System, I-100, for Schools: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100SC.asp>
- IS-362 Multi-Hazard Planning Emergency Planning for Schools <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is362.asp>

# Recovery

## Introduction

The immediate aims of **Recovery** are to restore the infrastructure of the school *and* to return to the normal environment fostering teaching and learning as soon as possible after the crisis. The emotional recovery of students and staff, along with the recovery of the physical plant that houses the school are the two main priorities.

Boulder Valley School District staff will assist the school staff in dealing with the psychological impact of the crisis, as well as helping to assess the initial emotional needs of students, staff, their families, and the community at large.

The physical assessment and recovery of the building will be managed by BVSD Operations.

### **Recovery Action Goals:**

- Strive to return to the normalcy of teaching and learning as quickly efficiently as possible
- Allocate appropriate time for recovery
- Restore the physical plant
- Monitor students and staff for the emotional impact of the crisis
- Identify what post crisis interventions are available to students, staff and community
- Conduct debriefings with students, staff and first responders
- Plan whether and how anniversaries and memorials for events will be recognized or commemorated
- Capture the “lessons learned” and use to revise plans and incorporate into future trainings

**One of the major goals of recovery...**

*is to provide a supportive, caring school environment*

# Recovery

## Role and Importance of Crisis Recovery Support

The first objective in any crisis situation is to manage the initial crisis effectively. Once the crisis has passed, another set of needs may occur in the form of psychological or emotional reactions by students, staff and others affected by the situation. Those reactions may take several forms, from physical outbursts to quiet despair, withdrawal or anxiety. Reactions to a crisis may present Crisis Response Teams with challenges even greater than the efforts put forth managing the initial event.

### **Be Flexible**

Because psychological reactions to a crisis event can result in a broad spectrum of behaviors, there is not an established set of rules that can be effectively applied to every situation. Crisis recovery support must be a dynamic activity that enables its participants to respond to the needs of each situation and each victim.

### **Roles of Building Crisis Response Team (BCRT) and District Crisis Response Team (DCRT)**

The BCRT is instrumental in arranging for and organizing recovery support, as its members are familiar with the students and staff affected. Following significant crisis or difficult situations, the DCRT has access to counseling resources, both within the district and within the community. Good communication between the BCRT and the DCRT is critical for an effective response.

### **DCRT Resource Activation**

The DCRT has immediate access to teams of employee counselors, psychologists and social workers who have been trained in crisis counseling. The Special Services department has overall responsibility for providing this support function for

schools, and has a process in place to ensure quick and effective action is taken as soon as they are activated.

### **Activating Recovery Support Resources**

Typically, activation of the recovery response group is through a BCRT request to the DCRT. However, a crisis such as a student or staff death may occur after hours or become evident too close to the school's start time to allow for the BCRT or DCRT to come together. In these cases, the Principal may request crisis recovery support directly through the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent or Special Education Director. If necessary, the recovery response team may then be activated on an "act and inform" basis – immediately mobilizing counseling resources and informing BCRT and DCRT after the mobilization has begun.

### **Special Services Department will provide...**

1. Trained professional counseling support
2. Oversight of psychological & emotional recovery efforts

## **Recovery**

### **Crisis Recovery Checklist**

*The BCRT at each school will review the following recovery elements and address as needed. Requests for DCRT assistance normally are made by the BCRT Incident Commander.*

- Human/Emotional Elements
  - Immediate Support
  - Ongoing support
  - Support Groups
  - Counseling for staff
  - Debriefings as needed during recovery
  - Outside or community resources as needed
  
- Safety and Security Elements
  - Assess safety and security of affected facilities
  - Assess utility/infrastructure capabilities
  - Assess air quality and other environmental issues
  - Determine and implement a repair plan
  - Coordinate security needs with Security Dept. and law enforcement
  
- Administrative Elements
  - Coordinate staff issues and needs with BVSD Human Resources and Special Services Department
  - Coordinate with BVSD Business & Financial Services Department before plans are put into action
  - Complete all require legal documentation and emergency management reports
  - DCRT will coordinate plans between Food Service, Transportation, Maintenance, Operations departments and others as needed
  
- Communications Element
  - Maintain accurate and consistent communication with all BVSD staff and “customers”
  - Coordinate Crisis Response Team and Crisis Recovery efforts with DCRT Communications officer for accurate, current information releases