NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

School Crisis and Disaster Preparedness and Response NASP Leadership: 1996–2009

Little more than a decade ago, crisis prevention and intervention were peripheral concerns for most American schools. Today, we know the issue must be a primary responsibility of every school district in the country. Our children and youth experience crises large and small that can significantly undermine their well-being and ability to learn. Crises can range from a major disaster or school shooting to traumatic family problems or the death of loved one or fellow student. Meeting the unique needs of children affected by a crisis is essential to minimizing immediate and long-term traumatic effects and to increasing the odds that they will continue to learn and grow despite the crisis. Schools are uniquely positioned to support this process, but they need resources and training to do so.

Extensive Experience

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has been a leader in school crisis response for more than a decade, first responding to requests to assist schools in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1996. Since then, NASP has provided direct support, training, and/or free public resources in response to:

- High profile school shootings from Pearl High School (MS) in 1997 to Virginia Tech (VA) in 2007
- Natural disasters including the California wildfires, tornados, midwest floods, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and international earthquakes and tsunamis
- Terrorism in the United States after September 11, 2001, and in Spain and England following bombings there
- Situational crises such as the loss of the Columbia Space Shuttle, the DC sniper, and military deployments to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
- Pandemic illnesses including SARS and H1N1 (Swine) Flu
- Suicide clusters across the United States
- Current economic crisis
- Major crisis event anniversaries

School-Based Expertise

NASP's expertise integrates community-based crisis response approaches (e.g., that offered by the National Organization of Victims Assistance [NOVA]) with the specific skill set of school psychologists who are trained to address children's mental health and promote successful learning and development within the school context. We have learned that schools play a critical role in crisis prevention and response, meeting not just the needs of students but also those of staff, families, and often the local community. Schools are, in fact, integral to an overall community crisis response in terms of:

- Providing a safe haven
- Disseminating information
- Identifying individuals at risk
- Providing mental health services
- Linking individuals with community services
- Tracking displaced families
- Supporting long-term recovery
- Generally serving as a focus of normalcy and providing structure in the face of trauma

Commitment to Enhanced School Crisis Capacity

NASP is committed to helping schools meet this challenge. In addition to providing direct support and resources, NASP is focused on advancing research and best practice, advocating for public policy that provides schools the

mandate and resources to build effective crisis response capabilities, partnering with government leaders and allied education organizations, and providing training to school personnel to build crisis management capacity at the local level. NASP emphasizes a comprehensive model that:

- Encompasses prevention, preparedness, intervention, and recovery
- Integrates physical and psychological safety
- Is targeted to children and youth
- Is appropriate to the learning environment
- Is culturally and linguistically
- responsive

NASP School Crisis Services and Initiatives

National Emergency Assistance Team—*Providing Direct Response* (http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/NEAT)

Established in 1996, the National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) is comprised of nationally certified school psychologists who have had formal training in and direct crisis experience involving man-made and natural disasters. As mentioned above, NEAT members have responded to a wide array of crises in the past two decades. NEAT's role varies according to the needs of each situation and team members provide services ranging from consultation over the phone to providing direct interventions and support as part of local crisis team management when invited. NEAT's mission is to:

- Provide direct aid and assistance to schools and communities in emergency crisis situations (only when invited)
- Promote crisis management preparation and planning
- Expand the network of professionals able to lend support to their schools and communities during a major crisis event
- Advocate for safe, healthy schools through legislative and policy initiatives

PREPaRE School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum—*Building Local Capacity* (http://www.nasponline.org/prepare)

NASP's PREPaRE *School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum* (PREPaRE) is the first comprehensive crisis prevention and intervention curriculum developed for schools by school-based professionals who have had direct experience in preparing for and responding to school crises. PREPaRE grew out of the extensive experience of NASP leaders who realized the serious need for cohesive, comprehensive crisis training for school personnel. Building local crisis management capacity has been a primary goal of PREPaRE since its inception in 2006. PREPaRE is grounded in research that:

- Integrates the U.S. Department of Education's four crisis phases: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery
- Makes use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and its Incident Command Structure
- Develops and coordinates the skills of existing school personnel
- Delineates important aspects of crisis team and crisis plan development and community collaboration
- Emphasizes the mental health implications for children and youth when a crisis event occurs
- Provides extensive training in school-based mental health crisis intervention
- Addresses how to minimize traumatic impact through good prevention, intervention, response, and recovery efforts within the school context

Online Crisis Resources—*Supporting Schools, Families, and Communities* (http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety)

NASP develops and makes available to the public a variety of resources to help parents and educators prepare for and support children and youth in the wake of a crisis event. Resources are disseminated directly through allied education organizations, the media, government websites, and the NASP website. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, the NASP website handled more than four million hits accessing specially developed crisis response materials. Since then, the NASP website has been seen as a critical resource for families and professionals responding to crises. Schools have permission to adapt most of the handouts to the needs of their school communities. Many handouts are translated and/or offered in audio versions.

Examples of topics include:

- Helping children cope
- Children's trauma reactions
- Death and grief
- Anxiety and depression
- Violence prevention
- Military deployment
- Talking to children about violence
- Promoting resilience
- Children with special needs
- Cultural competence
- Displaced families
- Memorials
- Talking with the media
- Suicide prevention/intervention
- Threat assessment
- Promoting tolerance

Foundation Support—*Public Service for Schools in Need*
(http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp)

NASP is committed to providing direct support when possible to schools and children in acute need after a crisis. This takes the form of pro bono or reduced-fee work by NASP leaders and staff and grant support from NASP's two foundations, the NASP Children's Fund and the NASP Education and Research Trust (ERT). Specific examples include:

- Providing PREPaRE training and resources throughout Mississippi and Louisiana for school personnel serving schools affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Working with the NASP Children's Fund and KaBOOM! to fund ($75,000) and build a playground for the Live Oak Elementary School in the NOLA Recovery School District during the NASP 2008 Annual Convention
- Raising more than $8,000 from NASP members through the NASP Children's Fund to provide grants to schools affected by Katrina
- Supporting school psychologists impacted by disaster (waiving membership fees, replacing professional resources at cost, reducing professional development fees, facilitating job placement)
- Providing school supplies and comfort items (e.g., stuffed animals) to children affected by trauma (NASP Children's Fund)
- Establishing grant funds (limited) within the ERT to send NEAT members to help schools who request support after a major crisis but who don't have funding, and to underwrite PREPaRE training for underfunded, high-needs schools

Professional Development and Publications—*Promoting Best Practices*
(http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts)

Expanding the knowledge base on school crisis response is a priority. In addition to *PREPaRE* training workshops, NASP offers many professional development opportunities at the NASP annual conventions and summer conferences. For example, the NASP 2008 Annual Convention in New Orleans offered more than 35 sessions on crisis related issues, including keynote speaker Dr. David Schonfeld, Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

NASP also publishes and copublishes a variety of resources on school crisis response that are used in graduate training and professional practice. Examples include:

- *Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention* (800-page comprehensive reference for school crisis team members and a graduate school textbook)
- *School Crisis Prevention and Intervention: The PREPaRE Model* (325-page detailed overview of the PREPaRE model and its foundational research)
- *School Psychology Review, School Psychology Forum*, and *Communiqué* (peer-reviewed journal and newspaper articles contributing to the literature on the latest research and best practice)
- *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators* (includes a section dedicated to Crisis & School Safety)
- *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* (released in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, National Institutes of Mental Health, and leading education and mental health organizations)

- *Safeguarding Our Youth: An Action Guide to Implementing Early Warning, Timely Response* (released in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, and leading education and mental health organizations)

Professional Collaboration and Advocacy—*Enhancing Our National Crisis Response Capacity*
Effective school crisis management is always a team effort. NASP collaborates with local, state, and national education organizations and government entities to raise awareness and improve the nation's school crisis response capacity. Examples include:

- Providing resources to organizations for dissemination to their memberships in the event of a crisis
- Reviewing and/or contributing to federal government public domain documents
- Partnering with local school districts (e.g., Fairfax County Public Schools, VA) to have crisis resources for parents translated into multiple languages
- Conducting training for and consulting with allied groups such as the National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, American School Counseling Association, the School Social Workers of America, National School Boards Association, and the National Association of School Nurses
- Working with the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and the American Red Cross to allow eligibility of state-licensed or state-certified school psychologists and school counselors as Disaster Mental Health (DMH) professionals in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters
- Collaborating with National Association of School Nurses and the National PTA to develop a fact sheet for parents and teachers on H1N1 Swine Flu (translated into Spanish and included with the resources on flu.gov)
- Coordinating with the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools to send NEAT members to respond to major crisis events
- Advocating for legislation and public policies that support school and community capacities to meet the unique needs of children and youth in the aftermath of crises and to promote safe schools
- Conducting media outreach and submitting/publishing op-eds related to major school crises

International Outreach—*Strengthening School Crisis Response Capacity Worldwide*
NASP maintains important relationships with crisis response and school safety experts around the world. NASP both provides expertise and seeks it. Our partnerships focus on sharing knowledge, providing support and resources in the event of a major crisis, and creating an international network of professionals dedicated to improving school crisis prevention and response for children and youth. Examples include:

- Providing translated resources and consultation after the terrorist bombings in Madrid and London
- Consulting with school psychologists in China after the earthquake in Sichuan in 2008
- Provide technical support in the aftermath of the school shootings in Germany in spring 2009
- Sending NEAT members to respond to the earthquakes in Turkey and to Shri Lanka to provide direct support after the Indian Ocean Tsunami
- Collaborating with experts from the International Stress Prevention Centre in Kirvat Shmona, Israel to train European school psychologists, sponsored by the European Union
- Conducting PREPaRE training in Canada, Greece, and England (upcoming). Greece is currently considering adapting PREPaRE for use in their county on a broad basis
- Conducting general school crisis training in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Greece, Romania, Switzerland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Palestine, Lebanon, Finland, and Australia
- Collaborating with international organizations such as the International School Psychology Association (ISPA) and the International Crisis Response Network (ICRN