

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCHOOL CRISES: TIPS FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Schools increasingly use social media to communicate essential information regarding crisis events. Parents and community members can easily receive real time alerts or notifications to get factual updates and helpful support. Students also can find connection and support with peers.










COMMON CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISES

- Schools must balance the need for timely information with ensuring accuracy.
- Law enforcement often determines timing/what information can be shared.
- Social media posts can contribute to psychological trauma by highlighting disturbing details or triggering a sense of personal connection to the crisis.
- Information may inadvertently cause fear or panic, resulting in crisis contagion (one crisis leading to another).
- School staff must manage increased threats and copycat behavior.
- Youth may post embarrassing, inaccurate, or inappropriate information related to the crisis.
- Adults can find it time consuming or intimidating to monitor youth's use of social media.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISES

Schools should have clear plans and processes in place that are clearly communicated to the entire school community.

- Establish social media as a reliable source of information before a crisis occurs. 
- Create social media practices that reflect community culture and encourage positive behavior and relationships. 
- Establish who is responsible for content and strategies before, during, and after a crisis. 
- Determine processes for approving social media posts and monitoring/responding to engagement by students, caregivers, the community, and media. 
- Understand potential barriers to social media use (access, language) and provide information via other low-tech formats as well. 
- Create and communicate social media policies. 
- Prioritize ongoing social media training for staff and students. 



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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA

The goals are to prompt needed actions, convey the facts, dispel rumors, and provide resources to facilitate healthy, adaptive coping.



BEFORE A CRISIS

- Advance communication regarding the school's family reunification plan.
- Crisis prevention information.
- Information about school crisis drills or trainings.
- Guidance regarding the school's social media policy and procedures.
- Natural disaster and other crisis event health alerts.



DURING A CRISIS

- Notification of a dangerous or threatening situation.
- Accurate crisis facts, event updates, and critical information.
- Shows of support and positive, encouraging remarks.
- Communication regarding the location and procedures for family reunification.
- School closure information.
- Guidance on how to minimize crisis effects on students.



AFTER A CRISIS

- Dates, times, and locations of community informational gatherings.
- Information about school and community mental health resources.
- Updates on school reopening procedures.
- Information about memorials and other recovery events.
- Strategies for positive coping.