



# Ask the Experts Webinar Series

## Responding to Death in the COVID-19 Context: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams

# “Ask the Experts” Webinar Series

- Series of recorded webinars to be posted on the NASP website
- Webinars are designed to offer support to school psychologists, interns, and practicum students as they navigate the delivery of school psychological services during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Each webinar will be followed by the opening of a discussion thread on the NASP member exchange community
- Each webinar will:
  - Address critical questions emerging as a result of the need to provide virtual telehealth school psychological services
  - Provide advice and guidance from experts
  - Offer suggested strategies and resources for addressing professional practice issues

# Expert Panel

**Cindy Dickinson, M.Ed.**, Manager, Crisis Intervention and Dropout Prevention Services, Fairfax County Schools (VA)



**Shane R. Jimerson, Ph.D.**, Professor, University of California – Santa Barbara



**Benjamin S. Fernandez, MS. Ed**, Lead School Psychologist, Loudoun County Public Schools (VA)



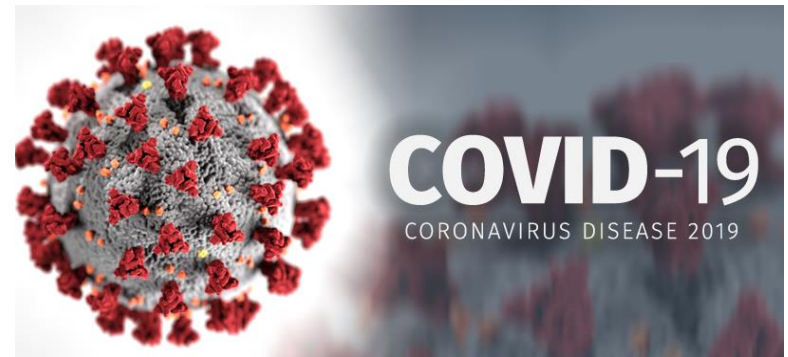
**Cathy Kennedy-Paine, MS. Specialist**, Lead NASP National Crisis Response Team; Retired School Psychologist (OR)



# Critical Question 1

**What types of crises are schools experiencing now?**

- COVID-19 Generated
- Crises that schools typically experience



## Critical Question 2

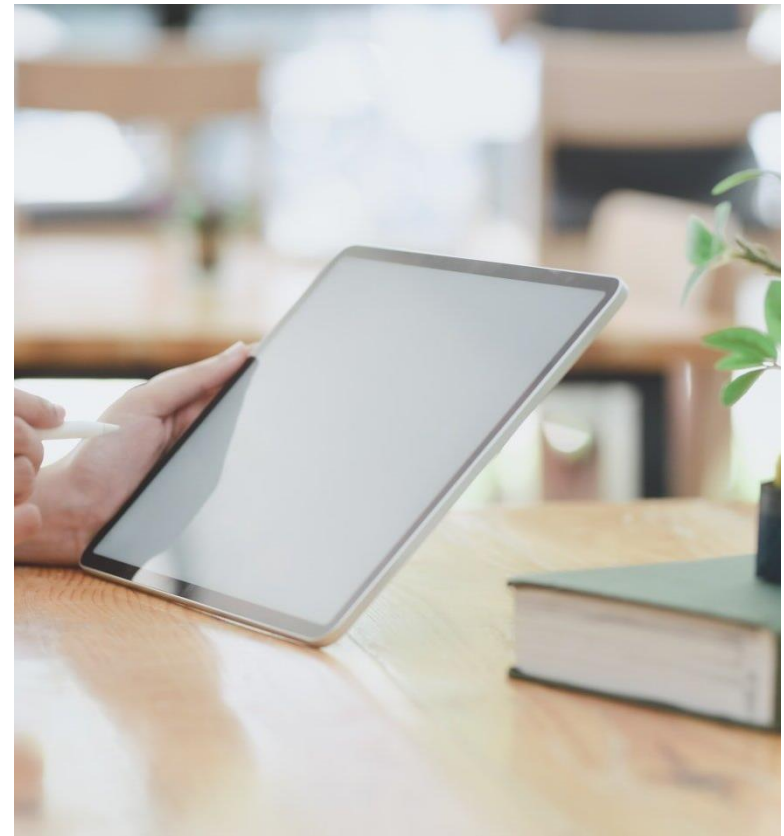
**What are the challenges when responding to a death during this pandemic?**

- Direct In-person to Indirect Virtual Response
  - Adapting of response structures and logistics
- Communications
- Team Management

## Critical Question 3

**How has the nature of crisis intervention changed during this time of physical distancing?**

- School based intervention to school/community-based intervention
- Resources and Materials
- Empowerment of Caregiver



## Critical Question 4

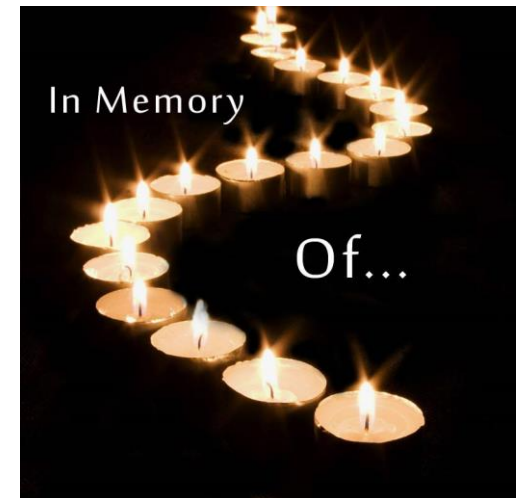
**What are some key considerations following the crisis response?**

- Examine Effectiveness of Response
- Share lessons learned with team
- Follow up and monitoring

# Critical Question 5

**Memorials help with the recovery process. In this virtual world, how do you see them being used?**

- A ritual to honor life
- Modify typical memorial activities
- Spontaneous memorials not recommended
- Planning only for permanent memorials





## Critical Question 6


**In the past, schools provided the ideal place for support after a crisis team had left, how do you see schools providing on-going supports virtually?**

- A challenge and an opportunity
- Natural connections
- Virtual connections
- Teachers as primary contacts
- Lead mental health person



# Adaptable Resources for Crisis Teams

- Contact method suggestions
- Tracking requests for support and related actions
- Phone consultation guidance for contacts with parents/caregivers and students



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
School Psychologists

## COVID-19 Resources

### Responding to Death in the COVID-19 Context: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams

School communities across the country are adjusting and adapting to the many changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many school administrators are sharing communications with families about education opportunities. Many teachers and students are actively involved in online learning activities. Each of these activities is helpful to reinforce safety and routine and to engage students in learning opportunities.

Within the contemporary COVID-19 context, there will be deaths within many school communities that impact the teachers, staff, students, and families. Recognizing that the death of a student, staff member, or parent often impacts many people in the school community, the response to the death is important to help facilitate healthy coping, adaptation, and bereavement. Communications with families, students, and teachers will be particularly important. The information presented below highlights key considerations in communicating a death with the school community.

**BE PREPARED—GET READY**

- Transition crisis team operations range from direct, in-person responses to indirect virtual responses.
  - It is important to know that pre-existing crisis team structures and operations can be adapted from direct response operations to remote virtual operations. When making this transition consider the following:
    - **Team structure and membership:** Start with looking at your current crisis team structure and determining if any changes need to be made to meet the needs of remote response. In most cases, it is possible to easily transition crisis teams to the virtual crisis teams. The challenge will be making sure that team members have an effective way to communicate with each other. Consider such methods as group texts, group emails, or chat-based applications, such as Slack or Teams.
    - **Team deployment:** Reflecting on the level of mental health crisis response (minimal, building, district, community), teams need to be ready to address single deaths to potentially large numbers of deaths. Depending on a district's size, demographics, and available resources, this may vary. However, reaching out and collaborating with community partners will be helpful.
    - **Team communications and documentation:** Review existing communication tools and make sure that they are secure and easy to use. Also, teams should consider accessibility with regard to reaching out to families (e.g., availability of internet access, languages other than English, etc.). Additionally, adapt, if necessary, and continue to use methods that teams previously utilized to document contacts, supports provided, follow up, evaluation of effectiveness, and team debriefs.
    - **Intervention delivery:** Like with any crisis response, teams must triage the event and evaluate the impact of the crisis event. Verifying information and collecting data, in some respects, will be similar to typical responses. However, some elements may be different or not available given this virtual, remote environment (e.g., direct observation of initial crisis reactions). Teams should consider adapting their typical response approaches from direct, in-person to indirect, remote responses; utilizing the adapted tiered interventions of PREPARED would be beneficial.
    - **Care for the caregiver:** Given this global pandemic, we are all under stress and pressure from a variety of sources. Making sure that team members are taking care of themselves and have personal self-care plans is

COVID-19 Resources | 1  
A resource from the National Association of School Psychologists | [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org) | 301-657-0270 | 866-331-6277

See NASP COVID19 Crisis and Mental Health Resources

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources>

# Adaptable Resources for Crisis Teams

- Sample Letters
- Crisis-specific resources
  - Grief and trauma
  - Suicide
  - Care for the Caregiver Training
  - Coping with the Covid19 Crisis Tips
  - PREPaRE Curriculum Handouts

*See NASP School Climate, Safety, and Crisis Resources*

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis>

# Key Messages

- The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation that is causing stress and uncertainty.
- Recovery from a situation crisis takes time and may not happen in a linear fashion.
- There are steps that school leaders and crisis team members can take to foster health and well-being in themselves and others.
- Awareness, balance, and connection can help.
- Celebrate small achievements.
- Seek help if in need.





# NASP Resources

- **NASP COVID-19 Resource Center**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center>

- **Responding to Death to in the COVID-19 Context: Guidelines for School Administrators and Crisis Teams**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/responding-to-death-in-the-covid-19-context-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>

- **WS1 Handout 21: Memorials: Special Considerations When Memorializing an Incident**

<https://www.nasponline.org/x38589.xml>



# NASP Resources

- **Coping With COVID-19 Crisis Distance Caregiver Training Guidance and Adaptable PPT**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/coping-with-the-covid-19-crisis-distance-caregiver-training>

- **Care for the Caregiver: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/care-for-caregivers-tips-for-families-and-educators/care-for-the-caregiver-guidelines-for-administrators-and-crisis-teams>

- **Self-Care for School Psychologists**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-health/self-care-for-school-psychologists>



# NASP Resources

- **Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM): Best Practice Considerations for K–12 Schools**

[https://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Resources/Crisis/Behavior\\_Threat\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Management\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Resources/Crisis/Behavior_Threat_Assessment_and_Management_FINAL.pdf)

- **Preparing for Virtual School Suicide Assessment Checklist**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/preparing-for-virtual-school-suicide-assessment-checklist>

- **Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention in a Time of Distance Learning**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/comprehensive-school-suicide-prevention-in-a-time-of-distance-learning>



# External Resources

- **After Suicide Toolkit, Second Edition**

[https://aws-  
fetch.s3.amazonaws.com/flipbooks/afterasuicide/index.html?page=1](https://aws-fetch.s3.amazonaws.com/flipbooks/afterasuicide/index.html?page=1)





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