

 Commission scolaire English-Montréal English Montreal School Board		
POLICY:	TRAUMATIC EVENTS SUPPORT TEAM SERVICES	CODE: SS-8
Origin:	Student Services	
Authority:	Resolution #00-06-20-9.3	
Reference(s):		

PREAMBLE

There is a growing awareness that all sectors of society, including educational institutions, are exposed with increasing frequency to events which are experienced as psychologically traumatic. These events may or may not be accompanied by physical injuries, but may nevertheless be detrimental to the emotional well-being of the students and school personnel who are affected. Some disturbing events have taken place over the years within the educational milieu (e.g. death of classmates, death of a parent, school bus accidents, suicides, etc.). However, not only are we presently more aware of the psychological impact of these types of events, but there are now growing numbers of critical incidents due to the increasing incidence of violence and aggression in society today. It has been shown that preventative measures, such as the services offered by the Traumatic Events Support Team, can reduce the frequency and the severity of post-traumatic stress disorder.

POLICY STATEMENT


The English Montreal School Board is committed to providing assistance to its school community in responding to a traumatic event which may occur in any one or more of the Board's schools or centres.

POLICY

1. The Student Services Department shall organize, train and supervise a Traumatic Events Support Team (T.E.S.T.) whose members shall be available to assist the school principals¹ in responding to traumatic events which may occur in any one of the Board's schools or centres.

¹ The term "principal" shall denote principal, centre director or his/her delegate.

2. If intervention and/or consultation services from the Traumatic Events Support Team are required, the principal shall request such services by contacting the Assistant Director of the Student Services Department.
3. The school principal shall ensure that the Policy Re: Traumatic Events Support Team Services is communicated to all in-school personnel on an annual basis.

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PROCEDURE:	TRAUMATIC EVENTS SUPPORT TEAM SERVICES	CODE: SS-8.P
Origin:	Student Services	
Reference(s):		

PURPOSE

To provide all EMSB personnel with a set of procedures to be followed in case of the occurrence of a traumatic event in any of the Board's schools or centres.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction**

Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction (also known as Critical Incident Stress Reaction) is a series of specific identifiable reactions (e.g. anger, nervousness, gastrointestinal disorders, etc.) experienced by a person who is exposed, directly or indirectly, to a psychologically traumatic event. These events are perceived consciously or unconsciously as outside of the usual experience of that person. Some events, due to their horrific nature or magnitude, may be perceived as traumatic by most people, while other events may have a strong impact on only certain individuals because of some predisposing factors such as the individual's previous life experiences, other ongoing stressors, etc. The same event may be experienced differently by different individuals. Post-traumatic stress reactions are common following traumatic events. Symptoms are generally not severe and do not persist over a long period of time, but in some cases they may result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

2. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms (e.g. depression, sleep disturbances, involuntary perceptual intrusions, etc.) following a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience. Symptoms are severe and/or persist over a long period of time (e.g. six (6) months or more). This disorder may require treatment.

3. **Debriefing**

Debriefing is a process, conducted very soon after a traumatic event, during which time a mental health professional (e.g. psychologist) provides pertinent information and facilitates discussion about the event in order to normalize the situation, as well as provide the necessary emotional support. Debriefing is *not* therapy but is often therapeutic. It is usually a group process but may include individual follow-up.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

1. If any staff member becomes aware of a traumatic event which has affected one or more members of the school community (i.e. staff, students, etc.), he/she shall immediately inform the school principal. The principal, in turn, shall inform the Regional Director.
2. The principal shall gather the necessary information, with respect to this event, from staff, family, friends, police, etc, in order to confirm the facts related to the incident in question.
3. The principal, in consultation with any one or more members of his/her Pupil Personnel Team and/or staff members and/or community representatives, shall decide if in-school resource personnel can respond effectively to the traumatic event. (The principal may, at any time, consult the Assistant Director, Student Services Department, to evaluate the event and/or to plan appropriate action.)
4. If intervention and/or consultation services from the Traumatic Events Support Team are required, the principal shall request such services by contacting the Assistant Director of Student Services.
5. The Assistant Director of Student Services shall then appoint a T.E.S.T. coordinator and, in conjunction with the latter, select T.E.S.T. members for the purpose of organizing and implementing an appropriate intervention plan.
 - a. T.E.S.T. Members
 - i. May include mental health professionals (i.e. psychiatrists, psychologists, guidance counsellors, social workers) as well as pastoral animators, student life animators, drug education resource workers, MRE consultants, ethnocultural community school workers, and other appropriate internal or external resource persons.
 - ii. The skills, expertise, training and background of the T.E.S.T. members, as well as the needs of the clientele, shall be considered in determining which individuals shall assist in response to a particular event.

- b. Role of the Team
 - i. Assists and advises the school principal.
 - ii. Assists in pre-incident orientation and education at the school and/or other levels, as needed.
 - iii. Assists in developing a school-based plan in reaction to a traumatic event.
 - iv. Develops and provides appropriate documentation and information to school-based personnel.
 - v. Provides advice, support and assistance to students, staff, etc. in response to traumatic incidents. This may range from consultation to actual individual and/or group interventions.
 - vi. Recommends/organizes follow-up support for students and school staff.
- 6. If the Traumatic Events Support Team is requested to assist a school in dealing with a traumatic event, the principal shall transmit to the team members detailed information about the incident so that they may be better equipped to respond effectively to the traumatic event.
- 7. The Traumatic Events Support Team, in conjunction with the principal, and, if appropriate, with selected members of the Pupil Personnel Team and/or other staff members and/or appropriate community representatives, shall determine and implement an appropriate response plan which may include any one or more of the following:
 - a. conducting individual and/or group meetings with staff and students to gather further information about the event;
 - b. conducting individual and/or group meetings and/or classroom sessions to impart appropriate information to staff, students, parents, etc.;
 - c. conducting debriefing sessions for staff, students and parents;
 - d. consulting appropriate community, religious, or ethnic resources;
 - e. contacting or sending letters to parents;
 - f. consulting with parents or with appropriate family representatives, where applicable, regarding certain details, such as: release of information, memorial arrangements, etc.;

- g. preparing an action plan, in consultation with the Board's Communications and Marketing Specialist, for the purpose of dealing with the media;
 - h. making in-school arrangements necessitated by certain events, e.g. emptying desk and/or lockers, arranging staff substitution, re-scheduling some activities, scheduling memorials/tributes, etc.;
 - i. scheduling age-related psycho-educational classroom activities and strategies;
 - j. scheduling appropriate follow-up actions based on anticipated needs. These may be ongoing strategies such as:
 - i. individual and/or group counselling;
 - ii. referral to community resources;
 - iii. further classroom activities;
 - iv. assigning appropriate staff members (e.g. guidance counsellors, psychologists; social workers, etc.)
 - v. assisting specific staff members or students;
 - vi. monitoring of certain students and/or staff members who may be more at risk as a result of the traumatic event.
6. The T.E.S.T. coordinator, in conjunction with the principal, shall coordinate ongoing or specific follow-up strategies and interventions.
7. The T.E.S.T. coordinator shall document all steps and interventions carried out in response to the traumatic event.