Adventist Risk
Management.

Campus Safety and Emergency/Crisis Planning
Are You Really Prepared?

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OCTOBER 2, 2006: WHAT BEGAN LIKE ANY OTHER DAY in a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, did not end like any before or hopefully ever again for the residents of that quiet community after a lone gunman killed five girls, aged 7 – 13, before turning the gun on himself. Five other schoolgirls were injured.

The Pennsylvania tragedy marked the third school shooting in the United States in less than a

whatever system works best for their program and follow any guidelines provided by their

Mitigation and Prevention

As part of this phase, schools need to determine what dangers exist in the school and community and should work closely with local authorities and emergency providers in the identification of

and when, as well as under whose direction? Establish who will take over for each of those responsibilities if something happens to the person in charge. Continuity of operations before and after a crisis is crucial. Roles to consider are:

- o School commander
- o Liaison to emergency responders
- o Student caregivers
- o Security officers
- o Medical staff
- o Spokesperson

- Develop methods of communication. Effective communication is crucial to staff, students, families, emergency responders, and the media when a crisis occurs, during the actual event and in the aftermath. The ability to communicate internally and with emergency responders during a crisis is crucial. During a lockdown or shelter-in-place is there good communication links between all classrooms/departments, administration and th

- Develop accountability procedures. At the staging areas, identify whether any staff, students or visitors are missing. In the college setting, students and staff could still report possible missing friends or coworkers upon arriving at the appropriate staging area.
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- Allow for flexibility in implementing the crisis plan. Flexibility is crucial, since no crisis goes as planned. Trained staff will react appropriately to most deviations.

- Documentation. Document all actions taken during the response. This will provide a record of appropriate implementation of the plan, and will provide information for insurance purposes, and financial records. Original notes and records are also legal documents and must be kept.

Recovery

The goal of recovery is to return classes, business operations and physical plant back to normal as quickly as possible following a crisis.

- Plan for recovery in the preparedness phase. Delineate staff roles and responsibilities. This can include establishing service providers ahead of time who can provide utility repairs, construction assistance and even back-up counseling services. Are there back-up facilities available for temporary classes or administrative offices, if needed?

- Return to the business of education as quickly as possible. Returning to class can often help students cope better following a crisis.

- Keep students, families and the media informed. Additional questions will arise after a crisis and families will still be concerned for their children's safety.

- Focus on the building as well as the people during recovery. Repair facilities and conduct safety audits to identify additional damage that needs attention.

- Provide an assessment of the emotional needs of staff, students, families and responders. Arrange appropriate intervention as needed.

- Provide stress management during class time, as needed.

- Conduct daily debriefings for staff, responders and others assisting in the recovery. Debriefings help staff to cope with their own feelings of vulnerability.

- Take as much time as needed for recovery. Some people will bounce right back after a crisis, while others require extended lengths of time to recover.

- Remember anniversaries of crises. School crisis planning guides often recommend holding appropriate memorial services or other activities following a crisis. Depending on the event that occurred, this action may be appropriate to help students and staff cope.

Pandemic

We can't look at crisis management without considering the possibility of a Pandemic Influenza outbreak.

In February of 2007, the Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released a document for interim planning guidance for mitigation of an influenza pandemic. That document of 106 pages and a similar 171 page Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan, issued by the California Department of Health Services, paint a grim picture.

The purpose of the guidelines is to give communities a tool for scenario-based contingency planning to guide local preparedness efforts. Communities facing arrival of a pandemic disease will be able to use the pandemic severity index to define which mitigation interventions are indicated for implementation.

Mitigation Strategies

The CDC is of the opinion that it is highly unlikely that we will have the most effective tool for mitigating a pandemic (a well-matched pandemic strain vaccine) when a pandemic begins. That means we all must be prepared to face the first wave without vaccine and possibly without sufficient quantities of influenza antiviral medications. Mitigation strategies, therefore are based on several levels of isolation including:

1. Isolation and treatment (as appropriate) of all persons with confirmed or probable pandemic influenza. Isolation may occur at home or in the healthcare setting, depending on the severity of the illness and/or the current capacity of the healthcare infrastructure.

2. Voluntary home quarantine of members of households with confirmed or probable influenza cases and consideration of combining this intervention with the prophylactic use of antiviral medications, providing sufficient quantities of effective medications are available and that a feasible means of distributing them is in place.

3. Dismissal of students from school (including public and private schools, as well as colleges and universities) and school

The chart at the right reflects the severity index
established by the CDC. It is not the purpose of
this document to discuss the factors used by the
CDC to develop the index, but to look the reasons

Planning Recommendations

Some key mitigation strategies follow; however, more in-depth information is available in the CDC booklet and particularly in Appendix 6 of that booklet, Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Interim Planning Guide for Elementary and Secondary Schools, and in Appendix 7,

- o Use social distancing methods to minimize close contact.
- o Encourage good hygiene in the workplace.
- Communicate with faculty, staff, students, and parents/families.
  - o Provide faculty, staff and parents with information on the school's pandemic preparedness plan.
- Help your community.
  - o Coordinate your pandemic plans and actions with local health planning.

Interim Pre-pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States, Easily Targeted Layered Use of Nonpharmaceutical Interventions, Department of Health and Human Services, CDC

School District (K-12) Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist, Department of Human Services, http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/schoolchecklist.html