Preparedness of Crisis Management within Educational Settings

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Objectives

This presentation seeks to educate participants to:

(1) define crisis preparedness in terms of crisis management and crisis readiness;
(2) develop members of a crisis team;
(3) develop a plan of action to take;
(4) become knowledgeable of the resources in the area; and
(5) educate all faculty and staff about potential threats.
Questions

• How many people work in K-12?
• How many people work at colleges?
• Are you knowledgeable about the crisis management plan?
• Are you apart of the crisis management team?
Interest in Recent Research

• Public school districts and universities
  – Columbine High School, 1999
  – Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007
History of Crises in U.S. Schools

• 1927 Bath School Disaster in Bath Township, Michigan (noted as the 1st incident)

More recent incidents:

• February 2, 1996, at Frontier Junior High School;
• October 1, 1997 at Pearl High School;
• December 1, 1997, at Heath High School;
• March 24, 1998, at Westside Middle School; and
• May 20, 1998, at Thurston High School.
History of Crises in U. S. Colleges

• 1966- University of Texas clock tower shooting
• 1970- University of Wisconsin-Madison bombing
• 1972- Hurricane Agnes
• 1983- Hurricane Alice
• 1989- Loma Prieta earthquake
• 1994- Cal State Northridge earthquake
• 1999- Texas A&M University bonfire collapse
• 2000- Seton Hall University fire
• 2001- University of Washington arson
• 2001- Tropical Storm Allison
• 2003- James Madison University fire
• 2005- Hurricane Katrina
• 2005- Hurricane Rita
• 2007- Virginia Tech University massacre
• 2007- Pepperdine University fire
• 2008- Union University tornado
• 2008- Northern Illinois University shooting
• 2008- Louisiana Tech University shooting
• 2008- Indiana earthquake
• 2008- Southern Arkansas train derailment
• 2008- Lady of the Lake University fire
• 2011- Virginia Tech University
• 2012- Texas A&M University
Crisis Management

“Crisis management proposes strategies and processes for preparing for, preventing, responding to, managing, recovering from, and learning from crisis events” (Gainey, 2010, p. 90).
Crisis Ready

By a campus’ adoption of a crisis management plan, the campus becomes *crisis-ready*, being prepared to respond to crises through:

(a) development and implementation of formal crisis-management plans,

(b) plans for two way communication that builds relationships with internal and external stakeholders, and

(c) strategies for providing effective leadership within the culture of the school community.
How does a campus become crisis ready?

(a) evaluate the organization’s communications climate;
(b) identify stakeholders crucial to the organization’s success;
(c) create a written communication network of stakeholders that could be relied on in a crisis;
(d) develop ongoing, two-way communication between the organization and key stakeholders; and
(e) incorporate a mix of traditional and new media in communication;
The 3 C’s

• Crisis-management plans;
• Communication with key stakeholders; and
• Cultural leadership
“We” over “Me”

When an incident occurs, it is not one person who is responsible for responding, but that of a team. The response will be smoother because one person cannot do everything simultaneously.

- More people have the advantage of being familiar with the culture and organization of their schools, affiliated families, and communities.
- More people will have quicker and easier access to the schools than outside agency service providers, and is more likely to have already established rapport with stakeholders.
- Team members’ inherent knowledge can be enriched through training with additional perspectives on what the schools’ needs might be during and after a crisis.
Members of the School Team

Role
- Principal
- Counselor
- Nurse
- Psychologist and
- Teachers

Function
- Crisis Response Coordinator
- Counseling Coordinator
- Media Liaison
- Security/Law Enforcement Liaison
- Medical Liaison and
- Parent Liaison

The advantage of organizing teams according to function versus roles is that it “allows back-up trained personnel to assume duties if a particular individual is not available.”
Members of the College Team

- Academic Dean
- Dean of Students (Student Affairs)
- Counselor
- Housing Director
- Campus Police/Security
- Risk Management
Multicultural Needs

A necessary player on the crisis team is any professional that speaks the language that dominates a culture within the community. This professional can translate and possibly provide insight into the culture.

Even if no one is employed by the school district or college, a volunteer or professional from another agency can be of paramount service.
Popular Models

• Crisis Incident Stress Management Model
• National Incident Management System with Incident Command System

evaluated with the

Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist
The CISM is outlined by:

(1) Pre-crisis preparation;
(2) Demobilization and staff consultation for rescuers;
(3) Crisis Management Briefing (CMB) for civilians, schools, and business;
(4) Defusing;
(5) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD);
(6) Individual crisis intervention;
(7) Family CISM;
(8) Community and organizational consultation;
(9) Pastoral crisis intervention; and
(10) Follow-up/Referral.
NIMS with ICS

*Education can also borrow the federal government’s National Incident Management System (NIMS) developed by the United States Department of Homeland Security to respond to emergencies.*

The portion that is most relevant to crisis management within educational settings is Incident Command System (ICS). The NIMS and ICS were recommended because since the model is used by so many other entities, there will be consistency or “common language with the many other agencies and response personnel that may be involved in responding to a crisis at school.”
CCPC

Regardless of the model that a school district or college system uses, there is a necessary resource that outlines the essentials of effective crisis management.

- The Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist, (CCPC) provides the structure and fundamentals that every crisis management plan should have.
- The CCPC is “a succinct and easy-to-use guide for evaluating existent crisis intervention plans in terms of their comprehensive coverage of potential events.”
Local Resources

- Community Counselors and other Mental Health Providers
- Law Enforcement,
- Emergency Responders,
- Public Health,
- Policy Upholders and Makers,
- Other Crisis Teams, and etc.
Educating all Faculty & Staff

Executing practice drills is important, because faculty and staff will be more comfortable and familiar about how to proceed if an incident actually occurs. This is important because in time of crisis, the execution of crisis management needs to be as smooth as possible. Ways to educate faculty and staff is to implement drills, and provide trainings/literature in laymen’s terms.

Benefits of drills:

- assess policies, plans, procedures, training, equipment, assumptions and partnerships;
- clarify roles and responsibilities;
- improve partnerships, coordination and communication;
- identify gaps in resources;
- measure performance; and
- identify opportunities for improvement.
Educating all Faculty & Staff cont.

Literature: Professional & School:

School districts and college systems can also provide literature to educate their faculty and staff.
Criticisms

• Due to the economy, every school district may not be able to have every member of the team on campus.

• There needs to be more alternatives to communicate with students, because all students, for example nontraditional or commuter students, may not get the message in time.

• Crises needs to be better emphasized as school districts are just fulfilling minimal crises requirements as posed on them by state and national entities.
Recommendations for Future Research Conclusion

Differentiation of Schools and Colleges

Much of the research that exists combines schools and colleges together. Yet, the research needs to be differentiated because although both institutions educate students, there are other variables and consideration. For example, there needs to be a plan that is specific to colleges, because many students live on campus. Many students do not have their own transportation so how can they evacuate the campus? Colleges do not have buses (or not as many) as school districts, so transportation is an issue.

Community Resources

While networking with the community, there is a gap about a donation of services. For examples, colleges may need to contract with hotels, so if there is a crisis, students can reside at the hotel until the crisis is over. Colleges and schools alike, may need to contact a facility that is large enough to conduct classes should students need to evacuate the campus because classes cannot be held due to damage of the facilities.
References


DEVELOPMENT AND RELIABILITY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE CRISIS PLAN CHECKLIST

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It is of vital importance that children are educated in a safe environment. Every school needs to have a well-developed crisis management document containing plans for prevention, intervention, and postvention. We developed the Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist (CCPC) to serve as a valuable tool that can be used to assist practitioners with evaluation of their school crisis management plans. To use the CCPC, school personnel should match the items on the checklist to elements in their developing or existing crisis plan to determine missing elements. By comparing a school or district crisis plan to the CCPC, practitioners or school personnel will be able to determine strengths and weaknesses of the plan as well as provide feedback for making their plans more complete and comprehensive. In this study, we describe the development of the CCPC and report on reliability data using this checklist. © 2010 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

In 1976, a busload of children was kidnapped in Chowchilla, California. The children and bus driver escaped after being transferred to a moving van buried in a rock quarry. It took the children 11 hours to escape through the hatch on the roof of the buried van (Terr, 1981). This was one of the first school crisis incidents that received national attention. Sadly, none of the children received intensive counseling or emotional support from either the schools or local mental health agencies after this traumatic event. Four years later, Terr (1983) found that brief treatment for these students did not prevent clinical symptoms of anxiety, depression, and fear. The long-term results demonstrated that school personnel were not sufficiently equipped to handle a crisis of this magnitude and that further steps toward school safety were needed.

Since the event at Chowchilla, the media’s interest in school violence has increased. The tragic events at Columbine, Littleton, Nickel Mines, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) were publicized almost immediately. Each of these incidents occurred without warning and created an increased concern for the safety of our children. During crisis situations such as these, school personnel need to know exactly what action to take in responding to the event. Administrators and school personnel must create a plan to follow that will assist them during times of crisis. Stephens (1994) believes that there are only two kinds of schools: one that has faced a crisis and one that is about to face a crisis. It is likely that every school district will face a crisis of some magnitude. Thus, it is important that individual schools and school districts are prepared for any type of crisis that could occur.

There are numerous articles in the refereed and nonrefereed literature that provide guidelines and techniques for crisis intervention. Few or none of these published manuscripts or books, however, provide a succinct and easy-to-use guide for evaluating existent crisis intervention plans in terms of their comprehensive coverage of potential events. We present here a description of the development and reliability of the Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist (CCPC), which was designed to guide administrators and practitioners in public and private school settings who are constructing or re-evaluating their crisis plans. As the previous incidents demonstrated, individual schools and districts must be equipped and ready to handle many emergency situations, regardless of the probability of

We thank LaDonna Saxon, whose original efforts in developing a brief crisis plan checklist provided the jumping-off point and inspiration for our extended checklist.

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their occurrence. Such situations include bomb threats, suicide, hostage situations, explosions, severe weather, and school bus incidents (Eaves, 2001). These conditions create chaos, thus threatening the order and stability of the school.

The main concern both during and after a crisis incident is the students’ physical safety and mental well-being. For this reason, it is essential that each school has a team that responds during the crisis and follows a prescribed plan outlining actions that address most, if not all, possible crisis situations. It is important that school administrators realize that even a tragic event that occurs outside school premises has the potential to adversely affect students. Consequently, a school crisis plan should include protocols on how to handle emergency situations that occur in the community, both on and off school grounds.

Furthermore, the plan should be based on a theoretical model (Poland, 1994). One popular theoretical model currently used in crisis plan preparation is Caplan’s three-tiered model of crisis intervention (Caplan, 1964; Klingman, 1993). The three tiers are primary prevention, secondary intervention, and tertiary intervention. This model can be easily integrated within a school’s structure, creating a comprehensive crisis plan that seeks to prevent new problems from occurring, to keep current problems from escalating, and to implement long-term follow-up plans in the case of traumatic events.

The rationale behind primary prevention is to attempt to preclude problems before they arise. In this manner, the school can be prepared when an emergency happens. Examples of primary prevention activities include conflict resolution training, emergency drills, and suicide prevention programs. Schools tend to have plans for fires or tornadoes, which are often required by outside agencies such as the local fire department. Other types of primary prevention, however, such as anti-bullying or conflict resolution programs, are often overlooked (Canter & Carroll, 1999). Some schools do not realize that crisis intervention must begin at the primary level. Poland and Pitcher (1990) emphasize that many schools may have an in-depth plan of what actions to take during a crisis and immediately afterward, but overlook the importance of having a strategy to prevent crises from occurring in the first place. Often, it is only after a traumatic event that a school realizes that primary prevention is a necessary step.

Secondary intervention occurs during or in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to minimize the effects and keep the crisis from escalating. Examples of actions that represent secondary intervention include notifying parents and the media, evacuating students to a safe place, and beginning emergency procedures. Without secondary intervention protocols, chaos could erupt. For example, a school needs to have a plan in place for the occurrence of a bomb threat to ensure that the children are kept safe and that the nearby community is alerted to potential danger. School administrators and education professionals may be reluctant to take valuable time away from teaching and instructional support to plan for a crisis that may never occur, but they must realize that crisis preparation is a vital part of creating a positive and safe teaching environment. Trauma can adversely affect students’ health and ability to learn (Nickerson & Zhe, 2004). If school administrators and staff members are not prepared for a crisis, their primary responsibility of educating the children will be compromised.

Tertiary intervention involves long-term and follow-up counseling and assistance, which might include referral for counseling or monitoring and supporting friends of a victim. Long-term planning is important in the aftermath of a crisis because even though reactions to trauma can have a lasting negative effect on children, those affected tend to be forgotten a year, a month, or even a season later. For instance, research has indicated that stressors including disasters, accidents, and suicides can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD, commonly associated with war veterans in military combat, occurs when an individual continues to relive a stressful event. Persons with PTSD experience flashbacks of the trauma as well as emotional numbing or physiological hyperactivity (Balaban, 2006). Research suggests that the more severe and complex the traumatic event, the greater the likelihood that the individual may develop symptoms of PTSD (Wenckstern & Leenaars, 1993).
Such effects likely occurred following the Chowchilla incident. Children who have PTSD may have difficulty concentrating and focusing on school-based tasks. Trauma can also cause dissociative reactions that may affect attention, memory, retention, and retrieval. Additionally, social problems, such as aggression, acting out, or separation from the group, can occur after a trauma, especially if the students do not have a support system or positive coping mechanisms (Eaves, 2001). Therefore, creating a long-term follow-up plan to be implemented after a crisis has the potential of increasing the students’ productivity during the aftermath.

There may be obstacles to crisis plan development. For instance, some school personnel may believe that creating an in-depth plan prior to a crisis may trivialize violent situations or even make the crisis worse (Trump, 2000). For instance, planning for a bomb threat or for a school shooting may make it seem as if these sorts of incidents happen every day and are common occurrences. Individuals who use this faulty logic may even perceive fire drills to be pointless in that they may induce unnecessary fear and panic. Failure to conduct fire drills, however, will lead to increased probability of injury and property damage in the case of an actual fire (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001). In response to the importance of crisis preparation, some states, such as South Carolina, have mandated schools to have crisis plans (Poland, Pitcher, & Lazarus, 1995).

Even if schools are mandated to create a crisis plan, there is no regulation as to what information is actually represented in that plan. There is plenty of research professing the need for crisis plans, but less that describes what should be included in the plan. Poland (1994) suggests some practical examples of information that may be included in a plan, such as transportation issues, drills, and evacuation procedures. Canter and Carroll (1999) advocate using calling trees, plans for natural disasters, debriefing, and anti-bullying programs. According to Jimerson, Brock, and Pletcher (2005), necessary crisis plan items include a directory of resources, plans for medical assistance, and plans for death. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) suggests having a crisis box, off-site locations for evacuation, and plans for dealing with the media. Schools may adopt some of these recommendations in their plans, but there is no guarantee that a single plan can incorporate every possible situation. School administrators and personnel are encouraged to create a plan that is multifaceted and addresses concerns unique to their specific community. For example, a school in Kansas may not need to plan for hurricanes but may need to hold tornado drills, whereas a school on the Gulf Coast may need to plan for both hurricanes and tornadoes. Additionally, schools with a high population of students and parents who do not speak English may consider having their crisis plan materials translated or have a translator on site during a crisis. Schools must be aware of special plans or accommodations that they may have to make due to their unique location or student population.

The size of the school community may present other opportunities to customize crisis plans, specifically concerning the makeup of crisis teams. For example, a large, urban school may place more emphasis on a school-based team, whereas a rural school may have more need for outside professionals because of the smaller amount of resources available within the school. The makeup of the crisis team should reflect the needs of the community and may even include key community leaders. For instance, community leaders could attend crisis planning meetings or provide assistance after a crisis (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Although certain information will most likely appear in all plans, different schools will have to consider inclusion of additional information that fulfills their specific needs and requirements.

Once school administrators and personnel decide to create a crisis plan, they have to choose what information to include. As previously noted, many researchers have provided suggestions of what should be included in a crisis plan. Some even provide a brief list of items to include in the plan (e.g., LaPointe, DeMary, Irby, & Cundiff, 1996). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has created a school crisis prevention and intervention training curriculum called PREPaRE...
Crisis Plan Checklist

(NASP, n.d.). Within this training curriculum, sample forms, checklists, and evaluations are included. This material, however, is not available to the general public, only to persons who attend a training workshop. Currently, only 54 school districts have sponsored a PREPaRE training program.

A succinct checklist that combines a multitude of the ideas of crisis management brought forth in the literature cannot be easily located in the refereed or published literature, however. As mentioned previously, there is not one pre-established crisis plan that will fit the needs of all schools, but schools will share similar concerns, such as school violence, fire, and vandalism. For this reason, we developed the CCPC so that school personnel can examine the items in their existing school’s crisis plans (and make necessary additions or improvements) or develop a new plan. Now we will discuss the development of this checklist and the results of our reliability study based on the checklist.

METHODS

Item Development

The CCPC (see Appendix) is an extension of a brief crisis plan checklist developed by Saxon and Bain (1998). This brief checklist classified approximately 50 items into the categories of prevention, intervention, and postvention. We used the checklist, with permission from the authors, as a starting point for developing an extended checklist. We extended the list to include items addressed in the current crisis intervention literature (e.g., Eaves, 2001; LaPointe et al., 1996; Poland, 1994; Trump, 2000).

In considering items to include in the comprehensive checklist, we kept in mind the fit of new items within our theoretical model of prevention, intervention, and postvention. In organizing the checklist, we developed some subcategories within the prevention and intervention levels. Specific subcategories were created to better organize the individual items provided in the checklist. Subcategories under prevention included general crisis prevention, violence prevention, accident prevention, and suicide prevention. Because there were several items that fit together in the categories of violence, accident, and suicide prevention, we clustered these items together in their own categories. The other prevention items are more general in nature. Examples of items in the prevention category include “Media policy in place,” “Provide a list of alternate team members,” and “Suicide prevention program identified.” Subcategories under intervention included general crisis intervention and specific crisis intervention plans. The items under the specific crisis intervention plans subcategory include particular threats or issues that may need to be addressed, whereas the items included in the general crisis intervention section should be used during most crises. Examples of items in the intervention section included “Plan for weapons found at school,” “Plan for natural disasters,” and “Plan for crisis occurring during the school holiday.” The postvention section contains items under only a general category labeled “General Crisis Postvention.” Examples of postvention items include “Crisis hotline established,” “Procedures to inform students and others of crisis,” and “Procedures for follow-up grief counseling.”

We developed a table format for the checklist items to facilitate use. To use the CCPC, evaluators simply compare the contents of their own school or district crisis plan with the CCPC list of items to decide if each item is addressed adequately in their crisis plan. Beside each item in the table, there is room for an evaluator to provide any necessary comments. Such comments could include clarification of what was in the plan, questions about the plan, or uncertainties about the classification of crisis plan elements. In the next column, the rater chooses “yes” or “no” to distinguish whether the item on the checklist was present within the plan. If the item was included in the plan, the evaluator would then record the page number of the crisis plan on which the item was found. To avoid confusion in rating items, we shaded every other line in the checklist.
To examine the clarity and consistency of the items in the CCPC, we initially obtained five crisis plans from local and regional school districts. We divided our researchers into teams of two; each team rated several of the intact crisis plans using the checklist. Results on the checklist were compared for each set of plans, and discrepancies were discussed by our entire team of researchers. In the case of a disagreement due to a misunderstanding of the item on the checklist, we edited the item to improve clarity. Some items were deleted from the checklist altogether due to irrelevance or duplication. Other items were split into two separate items for clarity. After considering all questionable items and making appropriate adjustments, we believed that the checklist was ready for inter-rater agreement. Collection of inter-rater reliability occurred in two phases, discussed below.

**RESULTS**

*Inter-Rater Agreement*

**Phase I (Pilot Phase).** In preparation for the pilot distribution, we obtained seven school crisis plans and duplicated them so that each could be reviewed by two graduate students. All school identifying information (including names of schools, names of individuals, and telephone numbers) was blocked out, and we numbered the pages in the plan, if necessary, to facilitate the rating process. The plans for Phase I were labeled as Forms A through E so they could be identified by the researchers.

Following approval of the study by the university institutional review board, the crisis plans were rated by graduate students during a professional ethics class. The participants who volunteered to complete the rating sheets randomly selected a crisis plan. We then distributed the packets containing the respective crisis plan, the CCPC, instructions, and an information sheet (including informed consent). After all of the raters had received their packets, we instructed them to complete the checklists individually. Completion of the checklists took participants approximately 20 minutes. Two graduate students rated each form, totaling 10 students rating the plans.

Although we included five crisis plans for evaluation in Phase I, we omitted data from plan D because one of the participants filled the checklist out in a notably consistent pattern that indicated that he did not read the crisis plan. Therefore, we obtained inter-rater reliability data for only four plans. We calculated inter-rater agreement by dividing the number of agreed responses by the total number of items for each paired set of crisis plans. Although the raters were asked to note the page number on which the information for a particular item was found, these data were not used when calculating inter-rater agreement.

The inter-rater agreement percentages for Phase I were as follows: Plan A = 79.22%, Plan B = 79.22%, Plan C = 87.01%, and Plan E = 79.22%. The mean inter-rater percentage of agreement was 81.17%. After reviewing comments and rewording items that had raised questions for the participants, we made plans for a redistribution of crisis plans for evaluation.

**Phase II.** During the second phase, we prepared seven individual crisis plans (five were identical to those used in Phase I) in a manner similar to that in Phase I. For instance, we blocked out school and individual information and numbered pages on plans that were missing this information. Participants in Phase II were graduate students in a class on professional issues in school psychology. Following a procedure similar to the one used in Phase I, we distributed the crisis plans to 12 students. Two of the students volunteered to rate extra crisis plans to ensure that all seven plans were rated. We calculated two types of inter-rater agreement from the results obtained from Phase II.

As we did with our pilot phase, we calculated the simple percentage of agreement. The inter-rater agreement percentages for the seven plans were as follows: Plan A = 92.21%, Plan B = 92.21%, Plan C = 88.31%, Plan D = 94.81%, Plan E = 81.82%, Plan F = 83.12%, and Plan G = 72.72%.
The mean inter-rater percentage of agreement for Phase II was 86.45%. Upon visual inspection, Plan G did not differ considerably from the other plans, even though the reliability was lower.

*Cohen’s κ Coefficients.* Additionally, we calculated a Cohen’s κ coefficient for each set of forms. This statistic considers the percentage of agreement that is significantly different from what we would expect by chance (Fleiss, 1981). The κ coefficients for forms A (κ = .73, p < .001), B (κ = .68, p < .001), and C (κ = .62, p < .001) indicate that the chance that two randomly selected participants would agree on the ratings of these crisis forms would be substantial. The κ coefficients of forms D (κ = .53, p < .001), E (κ = .57, p < .001), and F (κ = .45, p < .001) indicate that, if we selected two participants randomly, the chance that they would agree on the ratings of these particular forms would be moderate. Last, the κ coefficient of form G (κ = .35, p < .01) indicates that the chance of two randomly selected participants agreeing on ratings of this form would be fair (Landis & Koch, 1977). Each overall κ coefficient was significantly different from zero. With one exception (Form G), the κ coefficients indicated at least a moderate level of inter-rater agreement across the forms. On Form G, only a fair level of inter-rater agreement was obtained.

**Analysis of Item-Rating Differences.** The results of our analyses indicate that the CCPC has adequate inter-rater reliability and fair to substantial levels of agreement according to the values of our κ coefficients. We also examined raters’ differences on specific items, particularly noting comments and pages on which they verified the presence of items. Sometimes paired raters indicated that an item was present but on different pages, suggesting that material is sometimes repeated within a plan. In addition, the raters were not universally clear on whether an item needed to simply be mentioned in the plan or needed to be elaborated to count as being included in the plan. For example, if a crisis plan indicated that there is a media policy in place but did not mention what that policy is, was that enough to warrant an affirmative response for the item “Media policy in place?” In such instances, teams of raters may want to decide, a priori, what constitutes inclusion of a particular item (see suggestions in the next section).

**DISCUSSION**

We have described the development of the CCPC for use in evaluating both intact and developing school crisis plans. The CCPC was developed based on Caplan’s (1964) three-tiered model of prevention, intervention, and postvention. We provide inter-rater reliability data, and κ coefficients verify an acceptable level of consistent responding across raters and plans. Our raters agreed on the inclusion of an item in the crisis plan at hand between 79.22% and 87.01% of the time during Phase I (the pilot phase) and between 72.72% and 94.81% of the time during Phase II. The κ coefficients obtained for Phase II ranged from .35 to .73. For the most part, the inter-rater percentages and Cohen κ coefficients indicate a moderate level of inter-agreement. We recognize that variations in the formatting and composition of crisis plans may affect the reliability of ratings. We advocate for the use of the CCPC or some comparable checklist when school administrators, teachers, and support personnel construct new crisis intervention plans or re-evaluate older plans.

Our findings suggest that, generally, items on the CPCC are clear, concise, and objective. Furthermore, the three-tiered, hierarchical organization of the sections provides a theoretically based outline to guide the process of evaluating a crisis plan (Caplan, 1964; Klingman, 1993). In some cases, during our two phases of inter-rater data collection, our raters had difficulty identifying the presence of checklist items in the somewhat verbose text used in the crisis plan. To this extent it may behoove crisis plan developers to use bolded font, shorter paragraphs, and bullet points to make it easier for raters and users of the plan to find specific points in situations that demand quick access to information.

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A limitation we found after reading raters’ comments, gathered during inter-reliability studies, was the difference in ratings of items as being present based on a limited mention of the topic in the crisis plan versus being present based on an expanded section addressing the item. In the case of our research team’s interpretation of plan usage, any mention of an item should have been adequate to be considered present in the crisis plan. These guidelines were implicit, however. To keep our checklist as brief as possible, we purposely have not included explicit instructions at its beginning. Hence, it may be beneficial for teams of raters to clarify the level of specificity with which an item is addressed before rating their respective crisis plans. Interpretations may vary widely as respective teams develop their plans, but we anticipate that evolving discussions will arise during the crisis plan revision process.

The CCPC offers a unique opportunity for school administrators and practitioners to examine their own crisis plans to determine strengths and weaknesses and to provide feedback for making their plans more complete and comprehensive. Although other templates for creating crisis plans exist (Jimerson et al., 2005; Knoff, 2000), they are limited as they mainly focus on only one aspect of crisis management and do not include aspects of prevention, intervention, and postvention. The CPCC, because it uses Caplan’s (1964) three-tiered approach to crisis intervention, has the advantage of corresponding to several comprehensive models of crisis management, such as the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) model and the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Group Crisis Intervention Model (Eaves, 2001; Everly & Mitchell, 1999; Young, 1997). The CCPC, however, is simply a checklist for guiding construction of a crisis plan. It does not provide specific guidelines and techniques for schools to follow but rather allows school personnel to use the checklist and decide for themselves what should be included in their school’s crisis plan.

We note that, even though we have tried to include items in the CCPC that cover potential crises across most regions, some schools and districts have unique concerns based on their specific community. For instance, it is probable that only a school located beside a chemical plant may require a plan for chemical spills. We recognize that school administrators will be sensitive to the unique needs of their districts and will add items to the checklist to suit these needs. Additionally, schools must consider the type of students they serve and make special arrangements for students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). For instance, hearing-impaired students may not be able to hear emergency alarms or signals, and debris may hinder the evacuation of students in wheelchairs. While reviewing the items in the CCPC, school personnel must consider students with special needs and address modifications that will accommodate these students.

Additionally, although the CCPC can aid practitioners to determine the completeness of their school’s plan, it does not provide feedback as to whether their plan contains evidence-based strategies for preventing and addressing crises that could occur in their schools. A plan should address a variety of potential crisis events along with evidence-based preventive techniques, interventions, and postventions to maximize effectiveness. After using the CCPC to decide if an item is or should be included in their plan, school administrators and practitioners need to search the literature to find the best way to implement such ideas in their school environment (Brock, Lazarus, & Jimerson, 2002; Lichtenstein, Schonfeld, Kline, & Spese-Linehan, 1995). We recommend that future researchers should attempt to further evaluate the quality of school crisis plans by adding a component to the checklist that asks whether a plan’s preventions, interventions, and postventions originate from evidence-based findings.

Finally, we offer a caveat that we did not consider university settings or residential school settings when evaluating the current plan. Universities offer unique environments. For instance, students may encounter unique problems that arise from residing on campus and/or parking in multilevel garages. We recommend that the CCPC be carefully expanded and adapted before use in evaluating plans in universities or other residential school settings.
# Comprehensive Crisis Plan Checklist

**Type of Plan (District/School):**

**School Name:**

**Rater’s Name:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Y/N</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prevention</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Crisis team is established and spaces for identified members provided</td>
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<td>2. Team member’s responsibilities are described</td>
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<td>3. Provide a list of alternate team members</td>
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<td>4. General crisis team training is addressed (e.g., who trains and how often, excludes standard fire and tornado drills)</td>
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<td>5. Emergency numbers in addition to 911 provided</td>
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<td>6. Media liaison designated</td>
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<td>7. Media policy in place</td>
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<td>8. Crisis drills (e.g., who conducts them and how often)</td>
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<td>9. Crisis box and location is identified</td>
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<td>10. Alternate headquarters for crisis team is identified</td>
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<td>11. Crisis code is established that will convene the team</td>
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<td>12. Transportation personnel identified in preparation for possible crises</td>
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<td>13. Map of school is included</td>
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<td>14. Plan for evacuation with evacuation sites included</td>
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<td><strong>Violence Prevention</strong></td>
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<td>15. Anti-violence program and/or anti bullying program identified</td>
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<td>16. Anti-violence program and/or anti-bullying program mandated</td>
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<td>17. Problem solving and/or conflict resolution program identified</td>
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<td>18. Problem solving and/or conflict resolution program mandated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suicide Prevention</strong></td>
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<td>19. School employee safety program identified</td>
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<td>20. School employee safety program mandated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Prevention</strong></td>
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<td>21. Crisis plan distribution outlined and mandated</td>
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<td>22. Inventory of staff skills provided</td>
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<td>23. Develop a reading collection relevant to crisis situations</td>
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<td>24. Annual crisis plan review date set</td>
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<td>25. Anti-drug program in place</td>
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<td>26. Address a plan to promote a positive school climate</td>
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<td>27. School health program in place (e.g., face check, 911 awareness program)</td>
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<td>28. Addresses building safety and security (e.g., visitor log, door checks, access to one entrance)</td>
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<td>29. Has a list of staff members who are knowledgeable in first aid and CPR</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention</strong></td>
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<td>30. Intervention actions designated for each team member</td>
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<td>31. Communication methods designated (two-way radios, calling trees)</td>
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<td>32. Plan for immediate and accessible transportation</td>
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<td>33. Plan for designated media liaison to follow</td>
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<td>34. Plan for crisis occurring during school holiday</td>
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<td>35. Peer mediation instructional program is described and established</td>
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<td><strong>Specific Crisis Intervention Plans</strong></td>
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<td>36. Plan for bomb threats (excluding standard questions to ask caller)</td>
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<td>37. Plan for physical threats to students, faculty, and staff</td>
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<td>38. Plan for reported suicide feelings</td>
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<td>39. Plan for suicide threats</td>
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<td>40. Plan for death occurring at school</td>
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<td>41. Plan for identification of dead or wounded</td>
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<td>42. Plan for a school shooting and/or stabbing</td>
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<td>43. Plan for an intruder entering</td>
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<td>44. Plan for hostage/intruder who is armed</td>
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<td>45. Plan for a stabbing that occurs at school</td>
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<td>46. Plan for victims of violence/bullying</td>
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<td>47. Plan for fights</td>
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52. Plan for weapons found at school
53. Plan for gang violence
54. Plan for natural disasters
55. Plan for environmental/industrial issues (e.g., leaking pipes, carbon monoxide, explosion)
56. Plan for explosion or fire
57. Plan for kidnapping/childnapping
58. Plan for a lost/missing child
59. Plan for when a student runs away from school
60. Plan for a rape/sexual assault
61. Plan for coverage of classes in the event the teacher is involved in an emergency/crisis
62. Plan for an accident that occurs on the way to or from school
63. Plan for crowd control following crisis event
64. Plan for a rape that occurs outside of school
65. Plan for a hate crime that occurs outside of school
66. Plan for an arrest that occurs outside of school
67. Plan for an accident that occurs outside of school that involves students, faculty, or staff

Postvention

68. Procedures to inform students and others of crisis (e.g., phone tree, trauma/death)
69. Procedures to provide counseling for students immediately following crisis
70. Counseling and workshops for faculty/staff outlined (includes other debriefing procedures)
71. Procedures for follow-up grief counseling (up to at least 1 year in duration; e.g., anniversary date)
72. Plan to assist parents and/or guardians of students upon request
73. Procedure to monitor high-risk individuals post crisis is outlined
74. Crisis hotline established
75. Procedures to discuss a student’s/faculty member’s death in the classroom
76. List of potential classroom activities following a loss provided
77. Plan to address students and their relatives who have a major death or suicide in their family

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REFERENCES


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