

SAFETY ISSUES

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A. Crisis Intervention

School social workers provide assistance following broad loss situations and traumatic events such as suicides, acts of violence, and natural disasters. The school is likely to look to Student Services for expertise in providing direct services, assessment, and follow-up. The services may be provided by the School Based Crisis Team, Regional Crisis Team, and/or the District Crisis Intervention Team.

The Volusia County Schools crisis teams consists of multidisciplinary professionals from Student Services (school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, PLUS caseworkers, etc.). When a school-wide crisis occurs, the Lead or Co-Lead of the District Crisis Team will contact members of the crisis team to provide crisis counseling, triage services, etc., along with the school-based professionals.

The Regional Crisis Teams assist School Based Crisis Teams in dealing with emotional reactions to trauma. The following are examples of services the Regional Team provides:

- consultation to school staff on how to help students cope with trauma
- support and debriefing to students to minimize disruption of the school climate
- disseminate facts and decrease rumors in collaboration with the Director of Community Information Services
- ensure tragic events are not ignored
- contact and secure appropriate community agency support

The District Crisis Intervention Team is utilized when the resources of the School Based Crisis Team and Regional Team are not sufficient to handle either the number of students impacted by a traumatic event or the magnitude of the trauma. The Lead and Co-Lead of the District Crisis Team work collaboratively with the principals, area superintendents, and other district staff to determine the level of intervention needed. The following are examples of the types of intervention that the District Crisis Intervention Team performs:

- telephone consultation with administrators, School Based Teams, and Regional Crisis Teams
- consultation with district level administration (i.e., Superintendent and Deputies)
- collaboratively prepare a statement or information for sharing with the media, parents, etc., with the Director of Community Information Services
- facilitate the involvement of the Employee Assistance Program
- facilitate involvement of appropriate outside entities, such as Hospice Trauma and Loss Program

Refer to the [Crisis Response Guide](#) for additional information.

B. Suicide Prevention

School social workers assist in the training of school personnel regarding suicide prevention. Training includes topics such as suicide warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors. In addition, Concern of Harm procedures are reviewed and QPR (Question, Persuade, and Refer) or similar programs are outlined.

1. General staff procedures for responding to the threat of suicide (What can we all do?)
 - understand that we are all gatekeepers
 - learn QPR, an example of a gatekeeper program
 - use the Concern of Harm procedures
 - refer to expanded school-based mental health services as needed
 - inform the family of community mental health services

2. Tips when asking the “Suicide” question

- give yourself plenty of time
- remember that asking will not cause or increase the risk of suicide
- talk to the person in a private setting
- acknowledge that the person is in distress
- allow the person to talk freely
- contact administration and school counselor as soon as possible

3. Do’s and Do Not’s

- **DO** stay with the person at all times; supervise constantly – **DO NOT** allow the student to leave school
- **DO** take suicide threats seriously – **DO NOT** act shocked
- **DO NOT** agree to keep the student’s suicidal intentions a secret
- **DO NOT** minimize the student’s feelings
- **DO NOT** offer simple solutions to serious problems

If the student has the means to carry out the suicide act, **DO NOT** place yourself in danger.

C. Concern of Harm to Self or Others

School social workers may be involved with students regarding Concern of Harm issues. When parents cannot be contacted, an emergency referral should be generated to the social worker for assistance in making a home visit.

An abbreviated summary of the Concern of Harm to Self or Others procedure is as follows:

- when there is reason to suspect someone is suicidal or poses a threat to another – the process begins
- **school counselor is contacted and [Concern of Harm: Checklist](#) (form 2007108) is followed**
- parents/guardians are **always** notified
- parents are assisted in accessing emergency mental health services
- parents receive documents to ensure communication and confidentiality

Refer to the [Crisis Response Guide](#) for additional information and guidelines (section “Concern of Harm to Self or Others” on pages 60-66).

D. ID Badges and Procedures

District ID badges must be worn when visiting schools, homes, and community agencies for identification purposes. When visiting schools, Student Services staff is expected to comply with signing in and out on the [Student Services Staff Visitation Record](#) form and the individual school's visitation/sign-in policy. The following procedures were taken from a Human Resources document dated 11/4/09:

1. Purpose

The Volusia County School District (VCSD) is committed to providing a safe and healthful workplace for all employees. As part of this goal, the District has instituted an identification badge system for all employees.

An Identification Badge Procedure serves the dual purpose of readily identifying District employees and other authorized personnel, while providing measured protection against unauthorized personnel and intruders from entering designated secure work areas. The system is effective only if there is active cooperation and compliance by all employees at all times. Any laxity in compliance and enforcement subjects the entire system to failure.

- All Employees – Employee Identification Badges shall be worn at all times by all employees, on any County work site (the only exception is for safety or when employees are working at an external job site). Employees include permanent full time and permanent part-time, temporary/intermittent employees, volunteers, and interns.
- Visitors – Non-employees, other than contractors who are authorized to enter a secure-work site shall wear “Visitor” Identification Badges issued by the site. Many designated secure areas are protected by coded, combination locks, locked doors, or other physical barriers that limit public access. The overriding factor in designating areas as secure is to ensure the safety and security of students and staff within those areas.

2. Control and Issuance of Badges

Identification badges for permanent full and part time employees will only be re-issued when the identification badge becomes damaged, or the appearance of the employee changes to the degree that the photo is not a recognizable semblance of the employee.

Identification Badges will be issued by Human Resources. Normally, new employees will be issued their badge at the time of orientation. Otherwise, an administrator or designee at their site will need to request issuance of the badge. The front of the badge will contain the employee's photograph, first name (initial if working with students), last name, and position as detailed in the HR system.

Badges are the property of the District and are to be returned upon separation or retirement. On a terminating or retiring employee's last workday, the employee's supervisor shall require the employee to surrender the badge, and the supervisor shall return the badge to Human Resources for destruction.

3. Requirements and Enforcement

Because the procedures described herein are intended to provide for the safety and security of all students and staff, any employee who violates such policy may be subject to disciplinary action. All employees are expected to fully comply with all provisions of this policy. Management staff and supervisors shall enforce all provisions.

Identification Badges are to be worn at all times. Identification Badges are to be prominently displayed on the front of the person and are to be worn clipped to a piece of outer clothing, or worn around the neck on a chain or necklace. Identification Badges shall not be defaced or altered with stickers, decals, etc. Employee Identification Badges are to be worn so that the photo is clearly visible to others. For safety, employees performing certain jobs, such as maintaining or operating equipment, etc. should either clip the ID badge to their clothing or put the badge in their pocket.

Each Employee is responsible for safeguarding his or her own Identification Badge, and any lost Identification Badge is to be reported immediately to his or her supervisor. The supervisor will authorize a "Temporary" Identification Badge until the permanent Identification Badge can be replaced. A lost Identification Badge may be replaced without charge on a one-time basis. All subsequent replacements of lost Identification Badges will be issued at a charge of \$10.00 to the employee and/or Department.

E. Transporting

School social workers and PLUS caseworkers DO NOT transport students or parents due to liability issues.

F. Reporting Lost, Stolen, or Vandalized Volusia County Property, Equipment, or Records

1. Theft/Vandalism

a. From home

- (1) Immediately notify the police. Be sure to get a copy of the Police Report, indicating all VCS equipment, property, and/or records that were stolen.
- (2) Inform your supervisor as soon as possible. They will request permission for you to access the Incident and Loss Report form.
- (3) Complete the [Incident and Loss Report](#) (form 2006282). Enter all applicable information regarding the incident and follow the prompts. The completed form is then submitted electronically to the Communication and Monitoring Center (CMC), Budget (for any stolen items), Court Liaison, and Transportation. Once submitted, the report is assigned a case number. Print a copy of the report for your records. Information can be added or updated at any time.

Please Note: Christopher Boyer in Student Transportation Services (ext. 20808) is overseeing this process temporarily until it is turned over to MIS who now oversees CMC. (9/2/09)

b. From worksite (depending on where you are located)

- (1) If you are located at a school or are school-based, inform the principal immediately.
- (2) If you are located in the DeLand Administration Complex, notify the facility manager at the Communication and Monitoring Center (CMC), ext. 20056.
- (3) Inform your supervisor as soon as possible

- (4) Complete the [Incident and Loss Report](#) (form 2006282). Enter all applicable information regarding the incident and follow the prompts. The completed form is then submitted electronically to CMC, Budget (for any stolen items), Court Liaison, and Transportation. Once submitted, the report is assigned a case number. Print a copy of the report for your records. Information can be added or updated at any time.
- (5) Professional Standards (ext. 20256) needs to be notified, but this may be a part of the school/administration complex procedure.

2. Preventative Measures and Suggestions

- It is best practice to work on your C Drive and to back up all files and confidential reports on a CD or memory stick. Remember, all student records/reports are confidential and should always be handled accordingly.
- If transporting equipment, property, or records always keep them out of view (i.e., place in the trunk of your vehicle). It is best practice to leave student records in your office or school. If an exception to this practice becomes necessary (i.e., your day ended after a home visit, meeting, etc.), then do not leave the student record, materials, or property in your car, but take them into your home with you.
- Keep your vehicle doors locked at all times.
- Keep a log in your office with the names and Student ID codes of any records, along with the inventory or sheet item numbers including the serial numbers of equipment you are transporting, as this would need to be reported to the police, your supervisor, and on the VCS incident report.
- Take only the records that you need for that day.
- Clerical Support is to ensure that all envelopes containing student information, reports (Psychological and Social History), records, protocols, etc., are marked CONFIDENTIAL.

G. Personal Safety

Personal safety precautions should be taken as preventative measures to assist Student Services staff in avoiding problems. In addition to using individual and professional judgment as the best assurance for promoting personal safety, here are a few guidelines to remember:

1. Home visits

- Try to arrange meetings with parents at school or in your office when you believe that your personal safety may be at risk.
- Call families in advance of home visits as some people do not like surprises.
- Leave a complete and detailed itinerary with your office or supervisor, especially if going after-hours.
- If a school is aware that there may be danger and for some reason will insist that you risk your life, contact your supervisor. A School Resource Officer should be consulted.
- Make home visits with another school social worker or school personnel when you have reason to believe that your personal safety may be at risk.

- Avoid locations that appear unsafe. If the home looks as if visitors are not wanted or welcome, such as a fence, dogs, no trespassing signs or other warning signs, take the hint to leave a note and go away.
- Practice safe habits regarding your car (i.e., lock doors, keep valuables out of view, scan your car for intruders when re-entering).
- Ensure that your county badge is visible, identify yourself as the school social worker from “X” school, and state the reason you are visiting.
- Be actively alert and aware of your surroundings throughout the visit.
- When in a home, be aware of all exits, phones, and all individuals in the home. Ask family to keep pet leashed or in another room during the visit.
- If someone in the home becomes belligerent or hostile, conclude the interview.
- Make other staff aware of families or areas that may be problematic.
- Trust your instincts. If something does not feel right, it probably is not.

2. School visits

- Never sit with your back to the door.
- Give the parent and student personal space.
- Ensure that a telephone is in the room.
- Be aware of exits in the room and make sure exits are accessible to you.

H. Security Standards

A procedure manual of [Security Certification Standards](#) for Volusia County Schools is issued to all personnel. The manual is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. Written plans specify procedures to follow in emergency situations, such as weapon use, hostage situations, hazardous materials or toxic chemical spills, weather emergencies (i.e., hurricanes, tornadoes, and severe storms), and exposure as a result of a manmade emergency.

Some Security Certification Standards for Volusia County Schools that apply to Student Services staff include:

VCS 701	Post Crisis Emotional Reactions to Trauma (old standard 14)
VCS 702	Supportive Climate (old standard 33)
VCS 703	Bully Prevention Program (old standard 34)
VCS 704	Conflict Resolution (old standard 42)
VCS 705	Concern of Harm (old standard 62)
VCS 706	Suicide Prevention (old standard 63)
VCS 707	Parental Notification of Student Safety (old standard 112)
VCS 708	School Climate (old standard 118)
VCS 709	Community Resources (old standard 196)
VCS 710	Parent and Community Involvement (old standard 202)

I. Security Codes

Student Services staff should be aware of the district-wide security codes listed below and follow procedures accordingly.

RED	Lockdown/Hostage/Weapons
BLUE	Bomb Threats (evacuate area)
YELLOW	HAZMAT-Hazardous Material/Toxic Spills (evacuate area)
GREEN	Severe Weather/Tornado

J. Bully Proofing

School social workers participate in “Bully-Proofing Your School” initiatives at designated schools that have elected to use the program. Bully-proofing programs focus on developing a “caring majority” that consists of 85% of the student population that do not bully others. The program trains teachers and others to help students confront bullying behaviors by using peer pressure to build a norm of respect for differences. Students use self-help strategies and role-playing exercises to develop the skills to address bullying.