

Resources for Dealing with Community Traumatic Events

While statistically, schools are among the safest places to be within a community, recent events covered in the media combined with student or staff deaths that may directly impact a school community can contribute to feelings of grief, anxiety, and other emotions that can be distressing and disruptive to the educational environment. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has gathered resources to help schools support students, families, and staff who have recently experienced traumatic events. These events may include a loss of life within the school community, violence within the larger community, or stem from severe weather, natural disasters, or tragedies. KDE encourages schools and districts to talk with staff, students, and families about the safety protocols in place as well as the mental health resource that are available locally. The resources included here provide actionable information that can be implemented easily to benefit both students and staff our schools and community.

Districts will want to rely on their plan for implementing a trauma-informed approach in the schools, including referrals to school- and community-based mental health services provides. KDE's trauma-informed toolkit provides universal supports for students and staff as well as more intensive supports, as needed. A link to the trauma-informed toolkit can be found on the [Trauma-Informed Practices](#) webpage. KDE's [School Crisis and Emergency Response/Recovery](#) page has a variety of resource focused on how schools can help individuals and the community recover from crisis or emergency events, [including Implementing a Continuum of Tiered Behavioral Health Supports for Students, Families and Staff](#).

Family Resources:

The [Child Mind Institute's](#) recently published article [Helping Children Cope with Frightening News](#) provides tangible ways that adults can support youth who are experiencing a frightening event.

The [Managing the Stress of Children After a Disaster](#) and [Restoring a Sense of Well-Being in Children After a Disaster](#) documents created by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress provides care givers with guidance following a disaster.

[Help Kids Cope](#) is an app designed to assist parents in talking to their children about different disasters they may experience or have already experienced.

The [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#) has a [guide for talking to children about terrorist attacks and school and community shootings in the news](#).

School Resources:

The [Kentucky Center for School Safety](#) has numerous resources for students, school staff, law enforcement and parents, including [tragedy resources](#) and [sample emergency letters](#) that can be customized.

University of Kentucky’s Center on Trauma and Children has [free, self-paced online training](#) on coping strategies in the face of secondary traumatic stress as well as [live, online training on Sept. 19, 2024, 2:00 – 4:00 PM](#) to explore how working in a secondary trauma-exposed environment is impacting staff and reviewing strategies to mitigate those impacts.

[The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) has released a resource titled ‘[Helping Youth After Community Trauma: Tips for Educators](#).’ This guide helps schools recognize how trauma appears in children and provides strategies for educators to support them.”

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) offers valuable guidance through their resource, “[Coping Tips for Traumatic Events and Disasters](#).” This resource provides practical strategies to help individuals manage stress and emotional challenges during and after such events, fostering resilience and recovery. Whether you’re directly affected or supporting someone who is, these tips can be implemented before and after a disaster or traumatic event.