

**Trauma-Informed Leadership**

# **Rising to the Challenge: Staying Connected with All of Our Students**

**Matching Resources to Risk:  
Guidelines for Administrators in Support  
of Teachers and School Personnel for  
Multi-Platform Connection During a Pandemic**

**J. Kevin Cameron  
Dr. Marleen Wong  
Patrick G. Rivard**

**APRIL  
2020**



**NORTH AMERICAN CENTER™  
FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT  
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## Table of Contents

PURPOSE .....	4
OVERVIEW.....	5
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	6
WHERE DO STUDENTS SEEK SUPPORT IN TIMES OF CRISIS.....	7
DECIDING HOW TO MATCH STAFF TO STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES .....	10
TRAUMA-INFORMED LEADERSHIP: CLARIFYING ROLES DURING COVID-19 .....	12
PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA) FOR SCHOOLS – TEACHERS AND STUDENTS: LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT – MODEL & TEACH DURING THE WORLD-WIDE PANDEMIC .....	14
Appendix A: Guidelines For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Students: Series of Questions to Consider When Reaching Out to Students ....	15
Appendix B: GUIDELINES For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Parents and Caregivers of Students of Concern (SOC).....	18
Appendix C: Self-Care Interventions for Students and Their Families .....	20
How to Intervene in High-Risk Circumstance .....	22

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## *Rising to the Challenge: Staying Connected with All of Our Students*

### **Matching Resources to Risk: Guidelines for Administrators in Support of Teachers and School Personnel for Multi-Platform Connection During a Pandemic.**

#### **Purpose**

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to assist administrators and their teams to match students' risk to the best resources available, during the COVID-19 crisis. The initial phase of the pandemic has resulted in fewer resources for students and therefore the need to support them socially, emotionally, and educationally requires a collaborative strategy. Currently, government resources are primarily being directed toward the healthcare system. The emotional and traumatic impact on students is increasing and the effects are noted by educators. Many of our students of concern (SOC) are already struggling emotionally-behaviorally, and some will be at further risk because of intensified family dynamics during the quarantine period. As teachers and other school staff work to stay connected with students, it is essential to apply a trauma-informed approach to guide administrative decisions. The guidelines will inform, educate, and direct professionals in collaborative decision making related to: frequency, intensity, nature of student to staff contact, strategically matching staff to students and providing consistent guidelines for student engagement as educators and support staff are now "virtually" entering into the family's home. These virtual visits may shed light on situations that may require external support for students or the family.

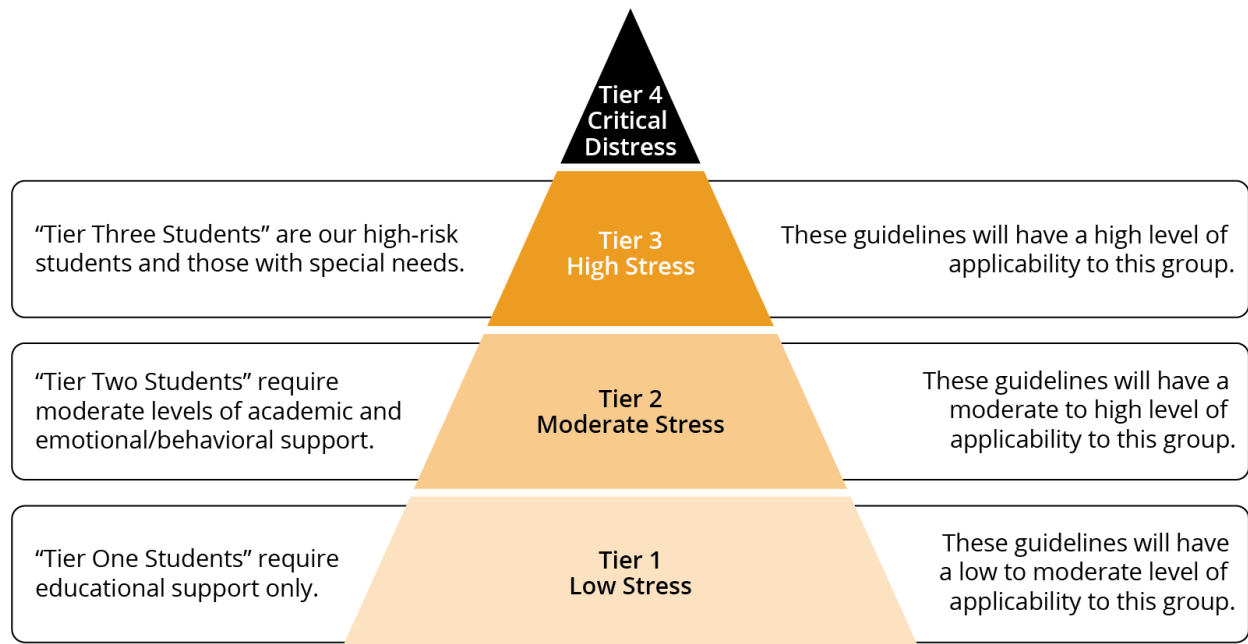
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*Teachers and school staff are providing supportive education, not family crisis intervention.*

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A distinction is made between "Tier One Students" who require educational support only, "Tier Two Students" who require moderate levels of academic and emotional/behavioral support, and "Tier Three Students" who are our high-risk students and those with special needs. Tier Four is an acute designation for students in immediate crisis where child protective services, police, or psychiatry are intervening. These guidelines are primarily focused on Tier Two and Tier Three students (See Diagram A) and matching resources to their risk. However, the recommendations for students of concern may become relevant for some Tier One students as the weeks go on and individual family stresses increase. This resource is focused on a trauma-informed educational response for the identification of student-staff-family capacity for learning and to formalize reasonable student support. **Teachers and school staff are providing supportive education, not family crisis intervention.** Therefore, they will need to understand the impact this crisis is having or will have as time goes on. These guidelines will assist traversing the most unique challenge of our collective lifetimes: a world-wide pandemic.

Diagram A



## Overview

In the past, most traumatic situations resulted in temporary modifications to how we operated our schools in the immediate aftermath. Within days, we were usually back to business but with the added weight of caretaking those most impacted. We often refer to this as “traumatic aftermath”. It is, therefore, more manageable when we get students and staff back to a routine, have predictability in our lives again, and draw strength from positive social and emotional connections. What is different in this global pandemic? It is far more challenging to support others in the aftermath as we are unable to support them in person as we are typically accustomed. In the midst of this ongoing world-wide traumatic event, we have been told to keep our physical distance from one another. In other words, we are being asked to provide support to our students, staff and parents in new ways, while an ongoing life-threatening event is still occurring. This is the first time we are all within a world-wide “Impact Zone”.

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*The Impact Zone is the geographical area that experiences significant emotional and behavioral changes in response to the trauma. (VTRA Level One Training Manual, 5th Ed. 2018)*

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To navigate through this crisis of social distance and physical isolation, it's essential to achieve some new understanding of how stress and anxiety during sustained exposure to a real or perceived threat, can affect students, parents/caregivers and staff alike. This is a temporary circumstance of unknown duration, yet protracted enough, that we must arrive at consistently creative solutions. The good news is that the same variables that have helped schools recover from traumatic events in the past are the same reliable variables that will help to lower the stress and anxiety of all now. What we know about recovery in general is that we must:

- Get students and staff back to a routine.
- Have predictability in our lives.
- Draw strength from positive social and emotional connections.

How this will be accomplished requires flexibility and some ingenuity, as no two schools are exactly alike. School leadership and staff can be creative; but in order to model calmness for students and their families, staff need new ways of interacting in response to the new circumstances, challenges and limitations of the pandemic. Their ability to define the challenges with new ways to re-connect and provide support will lower their anxieties which will, in turn, be felt by students and families. Trauma-informed educational strategies mindful of the power of teacher/school staff relationship dynamics with students and their families will go a long way in enriching the home-school experience. If done well, this temporary accommodation can improve the teacher/parent and school/family relationship beyond where it is now, as we build more intimate connections with each other. It is a standard in the crisis response field that "where there is a crisis, there are often opportunities". Nothing binds two people together more than exposure to the same stressful event knowing that we supported each other through it.

## Ethical Considerations

This is an unprecedented time for helping professionals. To be engaged in the response and management of a world-wide pandemic that includes the medical response as well as the social-emotional response has required most professionals to do things differently. For superintendents, school administration teams, and teachers these guidelines are developed to assist with the emotional and traumatic response and management of the pandemic as it influences the lives of students and their families. While education is the priority, creating the context for learning will not occur without thoughtful consideration of how heightened anxiety can influence students, families and the professionals responsible to help them. Three interconnected "models" lay the foundation for these guidelines:

- 1) Traumatic Event Systems (TES™) Model developed and applied specifically for high-profile traumatic events that influence symptom development in multiple systems at the same time. (J. Kevin Cameron et.al)
- 2) Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Schools: Listen, Protect, Connect - Model & Teach (Dr. Marleen Wong)
- 3) Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA™) Model which targets all forms of violence and is the only systems oriented "trauma-informed threat assessment model" currently in use (J. Kevin Cameron et.al).

All these models have comprehensive training programs. These guidelines are not a substitute for training. They are a reasonable response to help the helpers maneuver through an extraordinary time. As such, Dr. Marleen Wong has tailored her evidence informed practice (PFA) to the COVID-19/Corona Virus Worldwide Pandemic: “Listen, Protect, Connect - Model & Teach During the World-Wide Pandemic” (See: **Trauma-Informed Leadership: Clarifying Roles During COVID-19, pg. 12**)

### **Where Do Students Seek Support in Times of Crisis?**

As schools have been temporarily closed with many classes conducted online, the weight of connection for some of our students and families has fallen more uniquely on educators and other school staff as the primary or only point of contact. In the Traumatic Event Systems (TES™) Model, a distinction is made between a student’s “primary emotional support system” and “secondary emotional support system”. The primary emotional support system is the individual or individuals (often parents or family members) that a student is *naturally* drawn to when in distress. For them, prior connection and relationship experience denote that if their anxiety or fear begins to escalate, or spike towards their fight-flight-freeze threshold, they will default to that person(s) for support.

In some families, children and youth do not want to “hang around” with their parents/caregivers because their peers “seem” more important. The most reliable way to assess someone’s primary emotional support system does not depend on who they spend their time with when things are going well; but who they gravitate to, for support, when things are not going well. As such, the secondary emotional support system is who the student enjoys spending time with when their anxiety is lower.

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*The most reliable way to assess someone’s primary emotional support system does not depend on who they spend their time with when things are going well; but who they gravitate to for support when things are not going well.*

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The good news is, for most students their home life is stable. Therefore, balancing the learning needs of students with their emotional well-being is a dynamic that most educators were experienced at prior to the pandemic. The current circumstance has now shifted that support from the confines of the school environment to the home environment.

The challenge, that is contextually intensified by this pandemic, is that for some students, key staff members are their primary emotional support system. These students may feel abandonment and fear due to the physical loss of school staff and student connection. This will be intensified if they live in an emotionally disconnected home or if they are at risk of more tangible forms of abuse. Therefore, “text or talk” and “online or virtual support” is essential to assist the student as a whole person, impacted by the effects of a world-wide pandemic. For some of these students, the sound of the right voice, the right words and regular connection can provide them with stability and hope as they maneuver through this unique shared experience. For some of these students the continuation of their studies, from a distance, will be their ongoing drive to succeed. For others it is a distraction from the mundane, and for others the excuse for contact with outside adults they hope can be a lifeline if they need it.

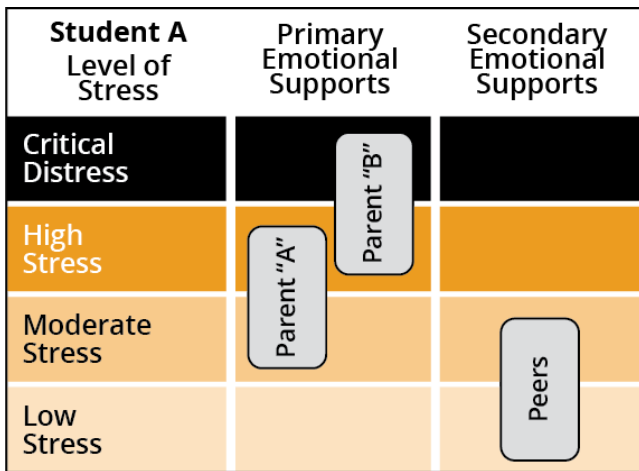
No matter what the family circumstance may be, there is also a temporary dynamic that must be understood by all educators and school staff who are reaching out to students and their families. To many parents and caregivers, “the school” is a powerful hierarchical entity in which they are not always sure where they fit. For some parents there is significant anxiety generated when dealing with the school even at the best of times. In many cases, the pandemic has shifted that dynamic because now the school is, in essence, entering their homes. Especially when connecting virtually, staff are entering a space where most had never been in before: the family home. Although these are unprecedented times in our world, the power of human connection remains the single most important variable. Unified in the same goal of supporting students, our contact with them and one another will continue to move us forward.

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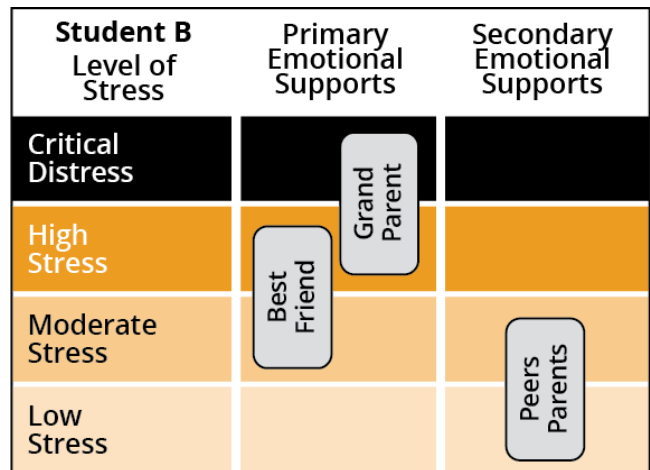
*Nothing binds two people together more than exposure to the same stressful event knowing that we supported each other through it.*

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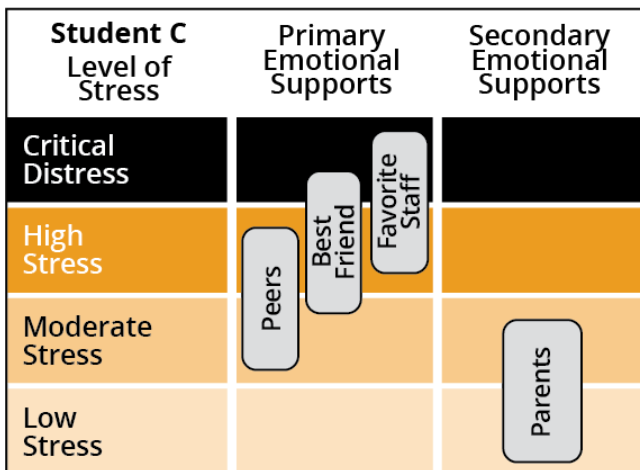
**These graphs represent individuals that students naturally gravitate to during times of Low Stress, Moderate Stress, High Stress, and Critical Distress**



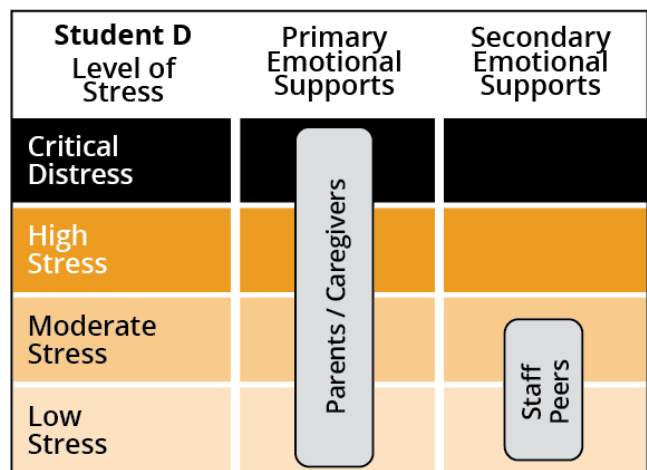
**Student "A"** Graph represents a student who is living in a shared (joint) custody situation. Parent "A" is the primary caregiver and has a good connection with their child while Parent "B" has a busy career, so their child only reaches out when they are experiencing high levels of stress. They feel very safe with Parent "B" but believe they should only justifiably connect when totally necessary. This same child spends a lot of their time with peers but always defaults to parents. This is a good family connection that can be strengthened during the pandemic.



**Student "B"** Graph represents a student who has more of a friendship relationship with both parents/caregiver(s) and their peers. They rely on one peer only (best friend) to bear the weight of their concerns and if they feel emotionally overwhelmed, they will default to their grandparent(s). The dynamics of trauma manifests if the grandparent becomes ill during the pandemic, both parents lose their job and the best friend is emotionally unavailable due to their own family circumstances. Depending on context, this family connection could be strengthened or deteriorate.



**Student "C"** Graph represents a student who spends a lot of time with peers and one best friend. Parent / caregiver relations are around basic needs with no meaningful conversations or connections. School and peers are the primary emotional support systems and being physically disconnected from school could dramatically elevate their anxiety. The relationship with their teacher denotes that staff member will be the most stabilizing adult support during the pandemic.



**Student "D"** Graph represents a student who quietly goes to school with no real emotional connection to peers. Their primary and secondary emotional support system is their parents/ caregivers and their family system as a whole. If they were doing good academically before the pandemic, they should do very well during the pandemic.

**Note:** In crisis situations where students are impacted, the standard in the TES™ model is that the adult system (school staff and parents/caregivers) must form a level playing field with each other to model calmness and collaborate on social-emotional supports for their children/students. For many families, COVID-19 requires an ongoing crisis response due to pre-pandemic and pandemic stresses. For example, prior personal loss, trauma, family discord, as well as, job loss and fear of contracting the virus. With that, parents/caregivers may need support as well. Any caring connection with a stressed or distressed parent or caregiver may be the best support you can give that particular student at that time. Therefore, in some situations contact will be with students and in other circumstances, a balanced combination of student and parent/caregiver contact will occur. Some Tier Two and Tier Three contacts may be parent centric. **(See: Trauma-Informed Leadership: Clarifying Roles During COVID-19, pg. 12).**

### **Deciding How to Match Staff to Students and their Families**

Each school varies as to how many “**identified students**” with special needs or vulnerabilities they have. How many students have complex emotional or behavioral difficulties and how many students are staff intuitively worried about? In particular, due to suspected concerns of a trauma history such as: abuse, chaotic family situations, substance abuse, unemployment or financial stresses, etc. In some schools, staff to student matching would be according to already established educational relationships. However, with students of concern, where school staff may also be their primary emotional support system, thoughtful and strategic matching will be essential. This also includes **high-achieving students** where their self-concept and self-worth is obtained through their academic success. If school staff is their primary emotional support system their risk for depression, anxiety and other clinical conditions may be exacerbated.

A Standard in the fields of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA™) and Crisis/Trauma Response (TES™) is: “The higher the anxiety, the greater the symptom development”. Therefore, to lower the anxiety of students of concern and their families, there should be consideration into who is the best person under the current circumstance to be assigned as the primary school contact. In higher risk or more complex cases, there should be consideration for having a secondary contact.

The process that follows is for students of concern where it is known or believed that learning will not occur without social-emotional support.

<b>8-Step Process: Preparing for Matching Resources to Risk</b>	
<b>Step 1</b>	School administration and their multidisciplinary teams (counsellors, psychologists, social workers, etc.) should meet to review these guidelines and create an initial assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Students of concern (SOC).</li> <li>b) Current educational and support plans.</li> <li>c) Contextual / Circumstantial modifications needed during the pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2</b>	Review E-Alert #2 "Trauma-Informed Leadership for Helping Professionals: How to Sustain the Heroes Among Us". Go to link for audio and text versions: <a href="http://nactatr.com/covid19a2.html">http://nactatr.com/covid19a2.html</a>
<b>Step 3</b>	As a leadership team, listen to the "Family Dynamics During a Pandemic" audio to assist in making decisions about educational modification(s) and strategic staff to student/family matching. This audio will explain some of the stress-related dynamics that are likely to emerge due to job loss, change in family constellations (who has moved in or out) and increased emotional intensity as a result of prolonged shelter-in-place. <a href="http://nactatr.com/risingchallenge.html#audio">http://nactatr.com/risingchallenge.html#audio</a>
<b>Step 4</b>	Have all staff listen to the "Family Dynamics During a Pandemic" audio and consider sharing this guideline with the entire staff.
<b>Step 5</b>	Consult with current and past staff members who may have detailed insight into current circumstances that may influence your decision. For example, last year's teacher may know that a single parent just lost their job and has allowed their ex-partner to move back in. The ex-partner was known to be emotionally abusive to the SOC, as well as concerns of suspected physical abuse.
<b>Step 6</b>	Connect with school staff regarding any special concerns they have or circumstances they are aware of that would result in a special modification for a previously unidentified SOC.
<b>Step 7</b>	Strategically match staff to students and their families. Refer to Strategic Domains for Matching below.
<b>Step 8</b>	Consult, Consult, Consult. Constant consultation between staff and administration.

## Strategic Domains for Matching

As noted, the purpose of matching is to lower the anxiety of the student of concern and their parent(s) or caregiver(s). “The higher the anxiety the greater the symptom development and the lower the anxiety the less the symptom development”. The right staff member(s) connected at the right time can make all the difference to an anxious student. Some examples of matching include:

- Gender.
- Cultural Background.
- Religious Background.
- Athletic Background.
- Academic Background.
- Age.
- Personality Traits and Characteristics.
- Country of Origin.
- Existing Relationship / Connections (Staff that taught the student in the past).
- Similar Family Circumstance.
- If a student of concern has moved from a previous school and had a positive connection there, consider using them (be flexible from a school district/division as well as a school level).
- Former teachers who have retired and volunteers.
- Extra-curricular volunteers (Coaches).
- Other

## Trauma-Informed Leadership: Clarifying Roles During COVID-19

When you know an interaction with a parent or student is likely going to require additional emotional energy, plan that conversation for when you are energized for it. For some people that is first thing in the morning and for others it may be in the early afternoon. As well, timing needs to be matched with what we know about that parent/caregiver as some may be more open to discuss in the morning and others later in the day.

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*When you know an interaction with a parent or student is likely going to require additional emotional energy; plan that conversation for when you are energized for it.*

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Many families have members moving home or are home all the time now due to job loss. Regularly assess by asking the student:

- When is the most relaxing time of the day for you?
- When is the most stressful or anxious time of the day for you?

Be ready to offer advice about establishing defined spaces where the student does schoolwork, spends time with family, and seeks private time. School staff need to understand this evolving pattern, usually due to the pandemic home confinement and intensified family dynamics. It is more strategic to make educational contact with the student during times they have identified as lower stress. Then consider having a counselor or school administration team member make a second contact that day, or every second day, during the anxious time for emotional support. These calls can help to regulate and interrupt the pattern of anxiety a student is experiencing.

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*Constructive use of self is when a professional strategically uses their own life experience to lower the anxiety of those they are assisting.*

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Professionally trained Counseling staff engaging with students and parents during this pandemic need to be reminded of “**Constructive Use of Self**”. Constructive use of self is when a professional strategically uses their own life experience to lower the anxiety of those they are assisting. Unfortunately, some professionals have not fully mastered the emotional impact of their own prior traumas or losses and inadvertently generate symptoms in those they are trying to help. The most concerning is when the personal sharing by staff results in the student or family member transitioning into emotionally caretaking the staff member. First principle of crisis response is “model calmness” and that can only be accomplished by determining in advance “what approach will be emotionally the safest for me and my student”. Stay focused as a professional and know your role and your limitations.

**Professional distancing is a priority for all staff.** Teachers should stay focused on the educational supports for the student. Teachers and other school staff are having as much a human experience as those that are the recipients of their support. As such, managing the emotional energy being expended on each student and family is essential. Teachers cannot be all things to all people, and there are other professionals trained to support teachers’ concerns when required. If teachers and other support staff find themselves in an interaction with an emotionally heightened student, they can apply “**Psychological First Aid (PFA)**”. PFA is a structured evidence-informed practice for teachers and other support staff to use to help lower a student’s anxiety and regulate their emotions in a non-counseling process. It is a strategy that guides students to self-identified solutions while allowing the teacher (staff) to maintain a caring student-focused intervention. Teachers and staff should always consult with administration or their designates if they are concerned after a student or family contact.

**“Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Schools – Teachers and Students: Listen, Protect, Connect - Model & Teach During the World-Wide Pandemic”** developed by Dr. Marleen Wong is the best guide to stay focused on the student and not get lost in the emotional maelstrom that may emerge from time to time.

Click the link: <http://nactatr.com/files/2020NACTATR-PFA.pdf>

There are limits to what academic, social and emotional support schools can offer during a world-wide shelter-in-place. If during or after a text-talk or online-virtual contact, the educational staff member is concerned about risk, they must place the burden in the hands of school administration who will rely on appropriate community partners, as needed.

### **Before You Make the Call:**

- What is your current exposure to COVID-19 related stresses?
- Take a few minutes before you make a call to do a personal inventory of how you are doing?
- Do you have the emotional energy to make the call today? Would it be more strategic to have the backup educator on the phone with you for this particular call, as three people: two staff and one parent - can change the dynamic for good?
- Each conversation will have a different purpose. Know what your desired outcome is but really meet the student or parent where they are at.
- Bridge each call with your prior contact with the student or parent. For example, “when we spoke last you said you were going to be Facetiming with your favorite cousin, did that happen? With a parent/caregiver, “before we talk about your son/daughter/child, I’ve been wondering all week, how did ..... go”? Bridging lets them know you care about their unique story. It lowers the anxiety and allows for an easier transition into education.

## APPENDIX A: GUIDELINES

### For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Students: Series of Questions to Consider When Reaching Out to Students

#### General Considerations For All Students:

- 1) **Consider the student you are calling: what challenges are unique to their situation? Who is the best person to contact this student and/or family? Is there a staff who is more connected? What is the family configuration? What is the best time to call given what you know about the family?**
- 2) **Who has been the primary contact for this student in the home? Consider that this may have changed given that many people are not working at this time.**
- 3) **Consider your role in contacting the student/parent, what resources you can offer, as well as your limitations.**
  - a) Administrator - reaching out to students and parents with high needs or unique situations, may be the only person who is in communication with the student or family, or may share this role with other staff. Consider the role of the other support staff, including but not limited to, Learning Resource Teachers and other Board supports. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
  - b) Teacher - provide academic support for ongoing learning, and relationship may be the only contact with the student or family, but if in conversation there is concern about a student or family, will notify the administrator. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
  - c) Other Supports - School Counselors, Registered Psychologists, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers - provide social emotional support to students and parents by phone, connect to community and crisis resources. Communicate with the administrator to inform of contact with students and families to ensure consistency of approach. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
- 4) **Offer calm to parents and to students. Be open and honest about the pandemic and how it has changed the way we do business for now. Let them know you are glad to be assigned as the school designate for their child and that you are aware you are entering their space (home) and want to be respectful of the changed dynamic. Underscore the reasons for your contact: How to continue the student's learning and to ensure academic success.**

- 5) **Listen to concerns. While you may not be able to offer solutions to things that are presented, you can be a supportive listening ear and offer to seek information or resources as appropriate.**
- 6) **Align with parents and caregivers in a healthy way, as to how we will approach the new learning expectations and challenges that come with it. Avoid participating in unhelpful conversations about the changes that the health crisis has brought about in education as well as in general, and instead focus on what we can control and what we can offer.**
- 7) **Give updated and factual information. Be informed about the most recent communications from government as well as governing boards. Have resources available that you can provide regarding reliable links to current information. Avoid speculating about the future plans if they are not known, this may only raise anxiety.**

### **This Is A Script For Initial Or Introductory Contact During The Pandemic.**

The age, emotional maturity, family circumstance and your relationship with the student will determine the direction of your conversation. Their responses to you will determine if there is a need for follow-up from another professional or support for the student or their family. Some students will want to know when they can come back to school so it's important for staff to only communicate what their district/divisional leadership has communicated publicly.

#### **Introduction**

- 1) **Q. I am glad we are able to connect over the phone or virtually and wondering how you and/or your family are doing?**

**Note:** Some students will immediately talk about themselves, but others will talk about their family. This may denote what their priority is right now. If the answer is a generic "ok", let them know you have missed them and look forward to being back together at school.

- 2) **Q. Who is living at home or visiting your home now?**

**Note:** This is to understand who may be able to be supportive of the students learning and who may be elevating family anxiety.

- 3) **Q. So what have you been doing the most since I have seen (talked to) you last?**

- 4) **Q. Have you been able to find a place to do some schoolwork?**

- 5) **Q. So what do you think about this COVID-19 stuff?**

**Note:** Model Openness.

**Note:** This is an opportunity to hear if they are becoming fixated on the news and fearing for their own safety or, if family members are, as some may say “I think it is..... but my Mom says it’s.....

**Note:** Use the opportunity to normalize and say: “I know, I have heard some people saying..... But as we learn in school the facts are ..... and the best place to look is (whatever information source you are using in your region).

**6) Q. What are your friends saying about this COVID-19 stuff?**

**Note:** An opportunity to understand, particularly for adolescents, if they are isolated or how much peer support or influence there is in the current situation.

**7) Q. What do you miss about school?**

**8) Q. What have you been doing to help you get through these difficult times?**

**Note:** This question focuses on coping and resilience, and what things students are doing to naturally manage stress.

**Note:** Students sometimes have important objects that regulate them that are at school. For example, a backpack, a picture they made, or if they are missing a person - a quick phone call from that person to just hear their voice may make a big difference.

**9) Q. What’s the most fun you have had since school has been out?**

**Questions to ask students: (To be asked if prompted to explore further due to student responses during regular contacts)**

- When is the most relaxing time of the day for you?
- When is the most stressful or anxious time of the day for you?

**How to End a Conversation.**

Try to end on a positive and let them know when you will be in contact again. Consider saying, “**I know some people are saying this is our new normal, but this is only temporary. We will get back to normal but until then I’m glad I had this time to teach you.**”

## APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES

### For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Parents and Caregivers of Students of Concern (SOC)

During the pandemic, many school staff are virtually entering the homes of their students. In many cases there will be ongoing dynamics that may be influencing how the student is doing and their readiness to continue to learn. It should be a priority for school staff to establish rapport (if it does not already exist) with parents and caregivers as soon as possible as they conduct their assessment of the student's level of adjustment. As noted in the “**Family Dynamics During a Pandemic**” audio, (<http://nactatr.com/risingchallenge.html#audio>) there may be a shift in the family hierarchy or family emotional process where a parent who has never had contact with school may now be the primary caregiver or decision maker. For example, the father who works away from home during the week, but is now laid off, may be resentful when he answers the phone and school staff attempt to bypass him and ask to speak to mom.

Be open and honest about the pandemic and how it has changed the way we do business for now. Let them know you are glad to be assigned as the school designate for their child and that you are aware you are entering their space (home) and want to be respectful of the changed dynamic. Underscore the reasons for your contact: How to continue the student's learning and to ensure academic success.

#### 1) Q. I have been thinking about [name the student] and wondering how you and/or your family are doing?

**Note:** Some parents/caregivers will immediately talk about themselves, but others will talk about their child only. This may denote what their priority is right now. If the answer is a generic “ok”, focus on their child only. As you build rapport over the weeks to come, your adult to adult relationship should improve.

**Note:** Where there are two or more students living in the same home and one school staff member has a better relationship with the parent/caregiver than another, it may be useful to have initial joint contact where both staff are on the same call just to say hello and break the ice.

#### 2) Q. How have you and your family been impacted by pandemic and all the shutdowns?

**Note:** Parents and caregivers need to know you are interested in them and their circumstance. The genuine connection you make with them will lay the foundation for your success with their child (student) as well.

#### 3) Q. So who is all home now?

**Note:** This is to understand who may be able to be supportive of the students learning and who may be elevating family anxiety.

**4) Q. Has it been possible for [name the student] to find some time to do some schoolwork?**

**Note:** Use this as your educational lead-in and then focus on the student’s education plan and what parents/caregivers need to feel supported while education is being delivered from a distance. Be ready to show parents any online class connections and to explain what the school’s expectations are for the next week or month(s) during a community ‘shelter in place’ order.

**Note:** If it becomes apparent that there are concerning issues in the home that are impacting the student, let the parent/caregiver know you have regular contact with school administration and that we still have our multidisciplinary team of professionals, including counseling staff who can help. Sometimes the teacher may need to over-function on behalf of the family and say, “I will have the Principal or the counselor, call”.

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*Some people are saying this is our new normal but this is only temporary. We will get back to normal!*

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### **How to End a Conversation**

Try to end on a positive and let them know when you will be in contact again. Consider saying, **“I know some people are saying this is our new normal, but this is only temporary. We will get back to normal but until then I’m glad I had this time to teach [name the student] and hear from you as well”!**

**Note:** Use the final phase of your contact to review and restate the outcomes of your conversation and if it feels like there is something not quite right about your interaction then **Consult, Consult, Consult!**

## Appendix C:

### Self-Care Interventions for Students and Their Families By Dr. Marleen Wong

The normal stresses of life before the pandemic required attention to the issue of self-care. How do these change during the pandemic stay at home orders?

To review, some of the domains of self-care are the following:

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Environmental
- Emotional
- Financial
- Social
- Spiritual
- Occupational

In the face of 'stay at home' or quarantine conditions, the importance of self-care remains the same but the steps we take to ensure good self-care for ourselves, our students and their families may be quite different. Here are some ideas in each of the domains:

**Physical:** Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition.

At risk, during stay at home directives, is the reality that adults or children can become couch potatoes binge watching television, streaming videos, playing online games or locked into social media sites and apps.

- Build in regular exercise at least 30 minutes 3 times a week remains the standard.
- For PE Teachers, recording or assigning an online/YouTube exercise video can take the place of an in-person class.
- Dance videos or videos of alternative forms of health activities such as yoga, pilates or tai chi can meet the need for regular exercise. These exercises can be done in the home or in the backyard, patio or balcony.
- Regular times for sleeping and eating keep our health in check.

**Intellectual:** Recognizing the importance of creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

- Online classes can help maintain the goals of education in the intellectual realm.
- Families limited to the confines of their homes---reading, reflection, building in time for regular brainstorming or non-judgmental (no right or wrong answers) discussion of ideas are ways to stimulate brains in a positive way. Reaching an agreement or consensus is not

important. What is important is that each person has the chance to express their opinions.

- Parents not used to such interactions can start with 15-minute periods after the family reads an article out loud, a chapter in a book or watches a movie together. Parents can formulate 3 or 4 questions about the movie to begin. For example:
  - If you had to pick 2 main characters in the movie or book, who would they be?
  - Did the town/places play a role? Could the story have been told anywhere else?
  - What did you like best about the movie/book
  - If you didn't like the movie/book, what was it that you hated or disliked?

**Environmental:** Maintaining good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

- Keeping each room in the house organized is more important than ever because your home becomes the space for family living, work and school. Identify new tasks and roles for each family member to keep things orderly and clean.

**Emotional:** Developing skills and strategies to cope with stress. Approaching life challenges with optimism and hope.

- Take time at least once a week in the virtual classroom or as a family to identify challenges and changes that need to be made. Then give each family member a chance to talk about one or two things they are grateful for in their lives since the pandemic began.

**Financial:** Recognize the impact of financial worries.

- The financial challenges imposed by the pandemic are no one's fault. Be aware that anger and blame can be projected onto children and other family members.

**Social:** Finding ways to stay connected to others.

- People fare better when they have access to a well-defined support system. During each day, create a balance between spending time with others and preserving private time alone.

**Spiritual:** Finding meaning and purpose in the human experience.

- People may question their faith, e.g., "Why would God allow this to happen?" Our core beliefs can be challenged in times of personal crises and natural disasters. Stay in communication with faith and spiritual leaders for guidance.

**Occupational:** Getting personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work.

- Educators and students still have important roles to play as teachers and learners. It may be more challenging online but research has shown that distance learning can be effective when both parties make a commitment to the process. Many professional disciplines are delivering graduate level educational programs online.

### How to Intervene in High Risk Circumstances

The fields of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA™) and Crisis/Trauma Response are inseparably connected. As we move further into the pandemic there will be stress-related escalations in some students lives. Teachers and other school staff should be counseled to notify students and their parents/caregivers that they are required to “update” and “consult” with their administrative team on a regular basis. Teachers and staff need to be reminded (or notified) of the following:

- **Consult, Consult, Consult!** (If you are uncertain about an interaction you had with a student or family member or about what you saw or heard, Consult).
- School Administration with support from Psychologists, Social Workers, Counselors, and other helpers will determine appropriate actions to be taken when Teachers and other school staff report concerns (this does not preclude a duty to report suspected child abuse).
- Utilize the Site-Specific VTRA™ team (School) and the School District (Division) and Community VTRA™ Team.
- Most districts have trained VTRA™ personnel.
- Child Protective Services and Police are “essential services” and will always be available.
- School administration (especially the Principal) should be available to maintain contact with SOC's similar to the pattern of interactions that would have resulted in the regular school setting.
- School administration (especially the Principal) should consider making online announcements to start each day and other text-talk or online-virtual communications that parallel a regular school day. In other words, model keeping a routine. This should include playing the National Anthem, including good news items.
- In the end, parents/caregiver are responsible for their own actions. Teachers and school staff are providing supportive education during a pandemic and not family crisis intervention.

**Remember:** “The better the data, the better the assessment and the better the assessment the better the intervention”.

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