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GUIDELINES TO HELP CHILDREN IMPACTED BY KELLY SHOOTING

A crisis situation such as the October 8, 2010 shooting at Kelly Elementary School can cause both acute and lingering emotional distress in children. Feelings of sadness, anxiety and vulnerability often result. In addition to the expected reaction of Kelly students to the trauma, children at other schools also may exhibit symptoms. Professional counselors from the District and other agencies will be available at Kelly, and at all schools, for as long as needed.

Children's reactions are strongly influenced by how their parents and teachers cope, making the importance of adults modeling normalcy and healthy behaviors a vital factor. Children turn to the adults in their life for information, comfort and help. Here are some common reactions parents and teachers may see in their children. They generally diminish with time, but knowing that these reactions may occur can help prepare you to deal with your child.

COMMON REACTIONS

- Feelings of anxiety, fear and worry about the safety of oneself and others.
- Increased clinging to parents, siblings and teachers.
- Changes in behavior such as increased activity level, decreased concentration, irritability, withdrawal, anger, aggression and physical complaints such as headaches and stomach aches.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD

- Maintain your normal daily routine.
- Limit their exposure to TV, print and Internet images of the event.
- Do not open the subject of the shooting for conversation, but do address it calmly if your child asks questions.
- Let them know it is OK to express their concerns. Offer a creative way – such as drawing – for them to express their feelings about the incident.
- Follow conversations about the event with a favorite story or activity to help them feel safe and calm.

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

- Take care of yourself. Eat well. Get enough sleep and exercise.
- Give yourself a break. Do not overdo or overthink things.
- Address any anxiety you may feel by speaking with a counselor.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

<http://www.carlsbadusd.k12.ca.us/prepare.html> (includes a number of links and resources, including a checklist called "Taking Care of Your Emotional Health")

http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/sdcounty/article_faa6f325_b4cb-5b95-8d77-33f3b60ce5cb.html is an excellent guide for parents that was published in the North County Times

SDCOE (http://www.sdcoe.net/ssp/support/pdf/suicide_guide.pdf - this link is relevant to any crisis situation)