

## Addendum to Parent Handbook

Casa Vera Montessori School  
2000 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M6M 3Y4

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# **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT POLICY**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for staff and licensees to follow to deal with emergency situations. The procedures set out steps for staff to follow to support the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

## **Definitions**

**All-Clear:** A notification from an authority that a threat and/or disaster no longer pose a danger and it is deemed safe to return to the child care premises.

**Authority:** A person or entity responsible for providing direction during an emergency situation (e.g. emergency services personnel, the licensee).

**Emergency:** An urgent or pressing situation where immediate action is required to ensure the safety of children and adults in attendance. These include situations that may not affect the whole child care centre (e.g. child-specific incidents) and where 911 is called.

**Emergency Services Personnel:** persons responsible for ensuring public safety and mitigating activities in an emergency (e.g. law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, rescue services).

**Evacuation Site:** the designated off-site location where shelter is obtained during an emergency. The evacuation site is used when it is deemed unsafe to be at or return to the child care centre. Our evacuation site is **the lobby of Keelgate Tower building, 2050 Keele Street (north from the church),**

**Meeting Place:** the designated safe place near the child care centre (**the back-exit door sidewalk**); where everyone is to initially gather before proceeding to the evacuation site, or returning to the child care centre if evacuation is not necessary.

**Unsafe to Return:** A notification from an authority that a threat and/or disaster continue to pose a danger and it is unsafe to return to the child care premises.

## **Policy**

Staff will follow the emergency response procedures outlined in this document by following these **three phases:**

### **1. Immediate Emergency Response;**

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- 2. Next Steps during an Emergency; and**
- 3. Recovery.**

Staff will ensure that children are kept safe, are accounted for and are supervised at all times during an emergency situation.

For situations that require evacuation of the child care centre, the **meeting place** to gather immediately will be located at **the back-exit door sidewalk**.

If it is deemed 'unsafe to return' to the child care centre, the staff with children will proceed to **evacuation site**.

**Note: all directions given by emergency services personnel will be followed under all circumstances, including directions to evacuate to locations different than those listed above.**

For any emergency situations involving a **child with an individualized plan** in place, the procedures in the child's individualized plan **will be followed**.

If any emergency situations happen that are not described in this document, the Principal will provide direction to staff for the immediate response and next steps. Staff will follow the direction given.

If any emergency situations result in a **serious occurrence**, the serious occurrence policy and procedures **will also be followed**.

**All emergency situations** will be documented in detail by the Toddler or Casa teacher in **the daily written record**.

### **Additional Policy Statements**

The regular fire drills to be performed as stated in **Fire & Safety Evacuation Plan**.

The school will ensure that the information on lockdown procedures will be conveyed to new staff, volunteers when they start working at the school.

Staff and students will practice **the lockdown procedures** twice a year.

As we will be practicing a lockdown procedure, we will be discussing the procedures with the children and the fact that sometimes there might be an unwelcome stranger in or around the school:

Volunteers/parents assisting in particular classroom will remain with those children. The visitors who are not attached to a particular classroom and extra

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curriculum teachers will make their way to the nearest classroom and remain with that class.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **PHASE 1 IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

##### **Hold & Secure**

When a threat is **in the general vicinity** of the child care centre, but **not on or inside** the child care premises, e.g. a shooting at a nearby building.

##### **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. The staff member who becomes aware of threat must inform all other staff of the threat as quickly and safely as possible. Announcement should be calm and clear.
2. Playground activities will be immediately discontinued and all students will enter the school building.
3. Activities in the Gym and also other activities (yoga, French, music, pottery classes etc.) will be immediately discontinued and all students will be directed to their classroom (young children to Nursery room and older children to Casa classroom).
4. Staff must immediately:
  - remain calm;
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for;
  - close all window coverings and windows in the program room;
  - continue normal operations of the program; preferably children will be involved in quiet activities sitting on the floor, away from windows, and
  - wait for further instructions.
5. The Principal/Head Teacher must immediately:
  - close and lock all entrances/exits of the child care centre;
  - close all blinds and windows outside of the program rooms; and
  - place a note on the external doors with instructions that no one may enter or exit the child care centre
  - will also verify whether doors leading from upper floor (upstairs from back door) to school premises are locked as well

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Note: **only** emergency services personnel is **allowed to enter or exit** the centre during a hold and secure.

### Lockdown

When a threat is on, **very near, or inside** the child care centre, e.g. a suspicious individual in the building who is posing a threat.

### Roles and Responsibilities

1. The staff member who becomes aware of threat must inform all other staff of the threat as quickly and safely as possible. Announcement should be calm and clear.
1. Playground activities will be immediately discontinued and all students will enter the school building and all children will be directed to their **safe areas or their classrooms.**
2. Activities in the Gym and also other activities (yoga, French, music, pottery classes etc.) will be immediately discontinued and all children will be directed to their **safe areas or their classrooms.**

Safe area for toddlers **based on circumstances** is **kitchen or garage.**  
Safe area for preschool children **based on circumstances** is **choir room or men washroom.**

**Children washroom** cannot be used as safe area in case of intruder, due to the fact that it does not have locks.

However, as there is high probability that the moving children to safe areas may endanger them (as the danger is imminent), then at the given signal the children in the classrooms remain in the room they are in.

3. Staff inside the child care centre must:
  - remain calm;
  - gather all children and move them away from doors and windows;
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for;
  - take shelter in safe areas and/or under furniture with the children, if appropriate; **lock the door**
  - turn out lights and move to less visible parts of the room
  - keep children calm;
  - ensure children remain in safe areas or the sheltered space;
  - keep as quiet as possible and have students sit against a wall that is out of sight of the windows and doors

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- **turn off/mute** all cellular **phones**; and
  - wait for further instructions
4. If possible, staff inside the program room(s) should also:
- close all window coverings and doors;
  - barricade the room door;
  - gather emergency medication; and
  - join the rest of the group for shelter.
5. The Principal/Head Teacher will immediately:
- close and lock all child care centre entrance/exit doors, if possible;
  - will also verify whether doors leading from upper floor (upstairs from back door) to school premises are locked as well and
  - take shelter

No one should move within the school.

Staff will not leave their assigned area unless authorized by the Principal/Head Teacher.

Note: **only** emergency services personnel is **allowed to enter or exit** the centre during a hold and secure.

### **Bomb Threat**

A threat **to detonate an explosive device** to cause property damage, death, or injuries, e.g. phone call bomb threat, receipt of a suspicious package.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The staff member who becomes aware of the threat or Principal must:

- remain calm;
  - call 911 if emergency services is not yet aware of the situation;
  - follow the directions of emergency services personnel; and
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for.
- A. Where the threat is received by telephone, the person on the phone should try to keep the suspect on the line as long as possible while another individual calls 911 and communicates with emergency services personnel.
- B. Where the threat is received in the form of a suspicious package, staff must ensure that no one approaches or touches the package at any time.

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### Disaster Requiring Evacuation

A **serious incident** that affects the physical building and requires everyone to leave the premises, e.g. fire, flood, power failure.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

1. The staff member who becomes aware of the disaster must inform all other staff of the incident and that the centre must be evacuated, as quickly and safely as possible.

If the disaster is a fire, the fire alarm pull station must be used and staff must follow the centre's fire evacuation procedures.

2. Staff must immediately:
  - remain calm;
  - gather all children, the attendance record, children's emergency contact information any emergency medication;
  - exit the building with the children using the nearest safe exit, bringing children's outdoor clothing (if possible) according to weather conditions;
  - escort children to the meeting place and
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for;
  - keep children calm; and
  - wait for further instructions.
3. If possible, staff should also:
  - take a first aid kit; and
  - gather all non-emergency medications.
4. Designated staff will:
  - help any individuals with medical and/or special needs who need assistance to go to the meeting place (in accordance with the procedure in a child's individualized plan, if the individual is a child); and
  - in doing so, follow the instructions posted on special needs equipment or assistive devices during the evacuation.
  - If individuals cannot be safely assisted to exit the building, the designated staff will assist them to relatively safe part of the building and ensure their required medication is accessible, if applicable; and
  - wait for further instructions.
5. If possible, the Principal/teachers must conduct a walk-through of the child care centre to verify that everyone has exited the building and secure any

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windows or doors, unless otherwise directed by emergency services personnel.

### Disaster – External Environmental Threat

An incident outside of the building that may have **adverse effects** on persons in the child care centre, e.g. gas leak, oil spill, chemical release, forest fire, nuclear emergency.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The staff member who becomes aware of the external environmental threat must inform all other staff of the threat as quickly and safely as possible and, according to directions from emergency services personnel, advise whether to remain on site or evacuate the premises.

#### If remaining on site:

1. Staff members who are outdoors with children must ensure everyone who is outdoors returns to their program room immediately.
2. Staff must immediately:
  - remain calm;
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for;
  - close all program room windows and all doors that lead outside
  - seal off external air entryways located in the program rooms
  - continue with normal operations of the program; and
  - wait for further instructions.
3. Principal/Teachers must:
  - seal off external air entryways not located in program rooms (where applicable);
  - place a note on all external doors with instructions that no one may enter or exit the child care centre until further notice; and
  - turn off all air handling equipment (i.e. heating, ventilation and/or air conditioning, where applicable).

If emergency services personnel otherwise direct the child care centre to evacuate, follow the procedures outlined in **the "Disaster Requiring Evacuation"** section of this policy.

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### **Natural Disaster - Tornado / Tornado Warning**

#### Roles and Responsibilities

1. The staff member who becomes aware of the tornado or tornado warning must inform all other staff as quickly and safely as possible.
2. Staff members who are outdoors with children must ensure everyone who is outdoors returns to their program room(s) immediately.
3. Staff must immediately:
  - remain calm;
  - gather all children;
  - take shelter in small interior ground floor rooms such as washrooms, closets or hallways;
  - take children's attendance to confirm all children are accounted for;
  - remain and keep children away from windows, doors and exterior walls;
  - keep children calm;
  - conduct ongoing visual checks of the children; and
  - wait for further instructions.

### **Natural Disaster - Major Earthquake**

#### Roles and Responsibilities

1. Staff in the program room must immediately:
  - remain calm;
  - instruct children to find shelter under a sturdy desk or table and away from unstable structures;
  - ensure that everyone is away from windows and outer walls;
  - help children who require assistance to find shelter;
  - for individuals in wheelchairs, lock the wheels and instruct the individual to duck as low as possible, and use a strong article (e.g. shelf, hard book, etc.) to protect their head and neck;
  - find safe shelter for themselves;
  - visually assess the safety of all children.; and
  - wait for the shaking to stop.



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2. Staff members who are outdoors with children must immediately ensure that everyone outdoors stays away from buildings, power lines, trees, and other tall structures that may collapse, and wait for the shaking to stop.
3. Once the shaking stops, staff must:
  - gather the children, their emergency cards and emergency medication; and
  - exit the building through the nearest safe exit, where possible, in case of aftershock or damage to the building.
4. If possible, prior to exiting the building, staff should also:
  - take a first aid kit; and
  - gather all non-emergency medications.
5. Individuals who have exited the building must gather at the meeting place and wait for further instructions.
6. Designated staff will:
  - help any individuals with medical and/or special needs who need assistance to go to the meeting place (in accordance with the procedure in a child's individualized plan, if the individual is a child); and
  - in doing so, follow the instructions posted on special needs equipment or assistive devices during the evacuation.
  - If individuals cannot be safely assisted to exit the building, the designated staff will assist them to relatively safe part and ensure their required medication is accessible, if applicable; and
  - wait for further instructions.
7. The Principal/Head teacher must conduct a walkthrough of the child care centre to ensure all individuals have evacuated, where possible.

## **PHASE 2**

### **NEXT STEPS DURING THE EMERGENCY**

1. Where emergency services personnel are not already aware of the situation, the Principal or teachers must notify emergency services personnel (911) of the emergency as soon as possible.
2. Where the child care centre has been evacuated, emergency services must be notified of individuals remaining inside the building, where applicable.

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3. If the Principal is not already on site, the teachers must contact the Principal to inform her of the emergency situation and the current status, once it is possible and safe to do so.
4. Where any staff, students and/or volunteers are not on site, Principal or teachers must notify these individuals of the situation, and instruct them to proceed directly to the evacuation site, if it is not safe or practical for them return to the child care centre.
5. Principal/ or teachers must wait for further instructions from emergency services personnel. Once instructions are received, they must communicate the instructions to staff and ensure they are followed.
6. Throughout the emergency, staff will:
  - help keep children calm;
  - take attendance to ensure that all children are accounted for;
  - conduct ongoing visual checks and head counts of children;
  - maintain constant supervision of the children; and
  - engage children in activities, where possible.
7. In situations where injuries have been sustained, staff with first aid training will assist with administering first aid. Staff must inform emergency personnel of severe injuries requiring immediate attention and assistance.

### **8a) Procedures to Follow When "All-Clear" Notification is Given**

1. The individual who receives the 'all-clear' from an authority must inform all staff that the 'all-clear' has been given and that it is safe to return to the child care centre.
2. Designated staff who have assisted individuals with medical and/or special needs with exiting the building will assist and accompany these individuals with returning to the child care centre.
3. Staff must:
  - take attendance to ensure all children are accounted for;
  - escort children back to their program room(s), where applicable;
  - take attendance upon returning to the program room(s) to ensure that all children are accounted for; where applicable; and

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- re-open closed/sealed blinds, windows and doors.

The Principal will determine if operations will resume and communicate this decision to staff.

### Communication with parents/ guardians

1. As soon as possible, the Principal must notify parents/guardians of the emergency situation and that the all-clear has been given.
2. Where disasters have occurred that did not require evacuation of the child care centre, the Principal must provide a notice of the incident to parents/guardians by e-mail.

If normal operations do not resume the same day that an emergency situation has taken place, The Principal must provide parents/guardians with information as to when and how normal operations will resume as soon as this is determined.

### **8b) Procedures to Follow When “Unsafe to Return” Notification is Given**

1. The individual who receives the ‘unsafe to return’ notification from an authority must inform all staff of this direction and instruct them to proceed from the meeting place to the evacuation site, or the site determined by emergency services personnel.
2. Staff must take attendance to confirm that all children are accounted for, and escort children to the evacuation site.
3. Designated staff who have assisted individuals with medical and/or special needs with exiting the building will assist and accompany these individuals to the evacuation site.
4. The Principal will post a note for parents/guardians on the child care centre entrance with information on the evacuation site, where it is possible and safe to do so.
5. Upon arrival at the evacuation site, staff must:
  - remain calm;
  - take attendance to ensure all children are accounted for;
  - help keep children calm;
  - engage children in activities, where possible;
  - conduct ongoing visual checks and head counts of children;
  - maintain constant supervision of the children;

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- keep attendance as children are picked up by their parents, guardians or authorized pick-up persons; and
- remain at the evacuation site until all children have been picked up

### Communication with parents/ guardians

1. Upon arrival at the emergency evacuation site, the Principal will notify parents/guardians of the emergency situation, evacuation and the location to pick up their children.

The Principal will either use e-mail blast to inform all parents or phone them using phone numbers in Emergency Information and Contact Form.

2. Where possible, the Principal will update the child care centre's voicemail box as soon as possible to inform parents/guardians that the child care centre has been evacuated, and include the details of the evacuation site location and contact information in the message.

### **Additional Procedures for Next Steps During an Emergency**

The staff will document children's accidents/injuries, if any and provide water and/or snacks if necessary.

## **PHASE 3**

### **RECOVERY (After an Emergency Situation has Ended)**

#### **Procedures for Resuming Normal Operations**

When procedures to Follow when "All-Clear" Notification is fulfilled and where applicable, the Principal is responsible for reopening the child care centre, contacting the Ministry of Education Program Advisor, responding to media and community inquiries, contacting the insurance company, informing the caterer, temporarily relocating, etc.

#### **Procedures for Debriefing Staff, Children and Parents/ Guardians**

The Principal/Head teacher must debrief staff, children and parents/guardians after the emergency.

The Principal will use e-mail blast to inform all parents about the situation and outcome of the emergency procedures.

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Each staff member will document exactly what occurred in their area of responsibility. This will be done as soon as possible. Reports will be turned in to the Principal.

A report of the incident will be prepared by the Principal.

The Principal/Head Teacher must record that a child has been picked up by a parent. Do not release child to anyone other than their parent, guardian, or emergency personnel.

### **Procedures for Providing Support to Children who Experience Distress**

After natural disasters, most children exhibit typical, temporary symptoms, which can be mitigated when parents and teachers provide emotional support and facilitate adaptive coping strategies.

However, some children may experience clinical symptoms, which require developmentally appropriate counseling interventions that integrate play.

#### Typical Symptoms of children

Children's typical symptoms after natural disasters include fear, depression. For children 5 years old and younger, typical symptoms include separation anxiety, excessive clinging, crying, whimpering, screaming, and regressive behavior such as thumb sucking and fear of the dark

#### Clinical Symptoms of children

Although many children will recover from these typical symptoms with basic family and school support after a natural disaster, some children experience ongoing symptoms that disrupt their daily functioning.

Children's clinical symptoms may result in a diagnosis of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), other anxiety disorders, or depression disorders.

Indicators of childhood PTSD include the following symptoms that persist longer than 30 days after the event:

- persistent re-experiencing of the event through intrusive memories
- frightening dreams (with or without recognizable content)
- repetitive play in which themes or aspect of the disaster are expressed
- increased arousal such as irritability or hypervigilance, and
- avoidance of things related to the disaster

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Children should be diagnosed by the specialized therapist who should ask parents, other relatives, and teachers whether children's behaviors would be considered "normal" for a given child prior to the disaster.

Since accurately diagnosing children with PTSD is very difficult due to their limited cognitive and expressive skills it is advised to provide treatment even if symptoms do not meet a formal diagnosis of PTSD.

### Parent and Teacher interventions

The specialised therapists can maximize their efforts by training parents and teachers to provide supportive responses and basic interventions for their children.

Parents play an important role in their children's recovery because children take their cues on how to respond to the disaster from their parents. Teachers may become efficient clinical mediators due to the central role in the lives of children.

If parents are out of control of their feelings and behavior, then children will feel more helpless and scared. If parents are appropriately upset but maintain optimism and control of their feelings and behavior, then children will feel more secure.

Therefore, it is important to teach parents and teachers how to maintain a non-anxious presence by enacting self-soothing strategies such as relaxing their body.

Specialised therapists should help parents and teachers focus on maximizing children's protective factors of good communication skills, strong self-efficacy, and positive coping skills.

To maximize good communication skills, parents and teachers should schedule regular times to talk with their children about their emotions and concerns. Since young children may not be able to verbalize their feelings, other communicative modes, e.g., playing, drawing, or singing, may be more effective.

Coloring books and free flow drawings are also useful ways for children to express themselves, to express their own story, feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

To maximize children's sense of self-efficacy, parents and teachers should reassure children that symptoms of nightmares, crying, etc. are typical and usually temporary.

Children's self-efficacy can also be enhanced by quickly re-establishing a routine that is stable and manageable. During the early phases of a natural disaster the

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normal rules, expectations, and responsibilities at home and at school are usually relaxed.

However, parents and teachers should remember that they do need to re-establish normal structure as much as possible. For example, parents could re-establish routines of reading bedtime stories or saying nightly prayers to comfort and reassure their children.

Teachers can resume regular classroom routines of readings, projects and other routine activities. In addition, parents and teachers can promote children's self-efficacy by encouraging them to participate in social and school activities as well as community rebuilding activities.

Parents and teachers should help children identify or learn positive cognitive, emotional, physiological, behavioral, and spiritual coping strategies that fit their unique coping style.

### Disturbing Dreams

Younger children's dreams related to the distressing event may change into generalized. For younger children, parents and teachers can encourage children to draw or color their dreams and then bury them in a structured ceremony. This symbolic burial gives children the power to bring an end to the significance of the dreams.

Another method is to ask children to blow their fearful dreams into a balloon and then release the inflated balloon. This activity helps children feel more in control as they see their dreams disappear.

### Counseling interventions

For children who experience typical symptoms after a natural disaster, parent should reach to the specialized therapist who should provide consultation along with supportive counseling, crisis intervention, and resources and referrals to meet basic needs.

However, if children continue to experience persistent symptoms that disrupt their functioning weeks after the natural disaster is over, then more intensive counseling guided by the specialized therapist is warranted.

## **Procedures for Providing Support to Staff who Experience Distress**

All situations are different and this is only a guide in cases of staff mental health difficulties or acute distress

Having someone very distressed or disorientated at work can be anxiety provoking for the individual, for other members of staff and for the Principal.

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However, most cases of distress are transient and do not indicate a serious mental health problem.

It is important to talk to the person gently and clearly in order to identify the issue and to help them to get the help or support they need. Sometimes when people are distressed they can respond in ways which are out of character for them or behave aggressively if they feel under threat.

This difference in behaviour though does not mean you are doing anything wrong. It is important not to escalate matters but to remain calm.

### See something - Recognize visible changes in behaviour

If you see any behaviour that may be out of character or unusual for your colleagues, know that early intervention plays a key role in recovery from mental health challenges.

Reflect on any visible changes in behaviour that might be uncharacteristic:

- What have I seen?
- What have I heard from the individual?
- How long have I noticed these behaviours?

### Respond with concern and empathy

Often we may notice changes in behaviour, but are unsure how to approach a person having difficulties. Reaching out to a colleague shows care and concern, and opens a dialogue to check how they are doing. Think about the best way to approach your colleague about your concerns.

- Am I the right person to have this conversation?
- Have I chosen a discrete and appropriate time and environment for this conversation?
- Do I need support from another colleague or supervisor?

It's okay to be uncertain about how to respond. You don't need to have all the answers. Being there to support your colleagues is often the most valuable thing that you can do.

### Dos and Don'ts:

- Do try to talk somewhere private
- Do try to ensure that you are not interrupted
- Do be gentle and clear



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- Do allow the person time to answer
- Do let them know who you will be talking to and what you will be saying to them
- Do repeat back to them what they have agreed for you to do
  
- Don't tell the person what you would do or did in a similar situation
- Don't attempt to diagnose the person
- Don't push for information if it is distressing them
- Don't make decisions the person is clearly unhappy with
- Don't tell others about the situation without letting the person know

Non-judgmental and supportive language includes:

“What do you need in order to...”

“Can I suggest...”

“There is a great resource to help with...”

### Refer your colleague to available resources

Individuals may not be aware of the wide range of support services available to them, or may be hesitant to ask for help. There are ways to connect your colleagues to resources, or to learn about them together. These are some of the resources available:

Canadian Mental Health Association - <https://ontario.cmha.ca>

Centre for Addition and Mental Health - <http://www.camh.ca>

Partners for Mental Health - <http://www.partnersformh.ca/>

Metal Health Commission of Canada - <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>

### Situations that may require a referral to appropriate resources:

- Family or relationship problems
- Chronic health conditions
- Difficulty concentrating or learning new tasks
- Difficulty sleeping

### For individuals

After you have had a conversation with your colleague, and if you feel that it's appropriate, ask them if they would be okay with you checking back in with them soon.

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Take care of your own wellbeing. Those resources are available to you as well. Check in with yourself and ensure that your personal and emotional needs are looked after.

### Steps Involved in Addressing a Distressing Situation in a school

- At the request of a teacher, the teacher will be removed from the distressing situation
- To be ensured that the teacher's class is covered.
- To be ensured that the distressed teacher is able to communicate privately with the Principal
- To be determined whether or not police and/or ambulance should be called
- To access WSIB Form 6 or 8 and forward them to teacher for their completion, if required. Explain to the teacher the importance of filling this out as a proactive measure towards their physical well-being.
- To be ensured that a secondary form of support is provided for the victim (i.e. call taxi for a ride home, call to family member, clinic, hospital, etc.)
- Call the police if required. This may include teacher assault as well as teacher bullying/harassment.
- Follow up with the teacher in a timely manner. Within 24 – 48 hours, the Principal shall meet with the teacher in an effort to effectively resolve or begin to resolve the distressing situation.
- Follow-up with the school community, specifically the affected teachers, by communicating to them pertinent details, as required.

### Effective Follow Up may include:

- Facilitating the co-ordination of preparation and lesson planning and/or leave of absence as required
- Implementing corrective action and changes to the workplace to ensure a safe working environment