

PROTOCOL FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION IN LUBAVITCHER SCHOOLS

By Mrs. Dena Gorkin in conjunction with Menachem Education Foundation

In case of medical emergency, call Hatzalah and/or 911 immediately.

Overview and Disclaimers:

This document is a suggested protocol for identifying and responding to students in crisis.

- 1) This is a beta version and we welcome your additions and input: info@mymef.org
- 2) This document is in the process of review by mental health professionals and will be updated in the future.
- 3) This protocol has been prepared by Mrs. Dena Gorkin, based upon her experience as principal of Bnos Chomesh Academy, in conjunction with teachers and principals at the Kinus Mechanchos Chabad, and Women's Chabad School Leadership Summit.
- 4) MEF and Mrs. Gorkin do not take responsibility for this document and the outcome of any crisis in your school. It is up to each school to use this as a resource, and to take responsibility for responding to crisis in the best way possible.
- 5) The optimal crisis response has fundamental principles, the details of which may vary between schools and communities. You are encouraged to edit this document so that it best serves your school's needs. For an editable version, please contact Chanah Rose at info@mymef.org.
- 6) Please take the time to fill out the last pages with your own school's local and affiliated resources and professionals. If you are a teacher, ask your principal for guidance, and if you are a principal, provide this information to your staff. This can make all the difference.
- 7) This document will only serve its purpose if it serves as framework for ongoing discussion, consensus and follow-up among all school staff members. It is not meant to remain on paper.
- 8) It is crucial that all staff—administrators, teachers, secretaries, support staff—be trained in crisis protocol.
- 9) Aside from general crisis protocol training, all staff members and students should attend a suicide prevention training.

Finally, when teachers were surveyed at the Kinus Mechanchos Chabad about what they need in order to serve their students better in the realm of social-emotional crisis and mental health, the overwhelming response was: Knowledge. Information. Professional development on these areas. Please take the time to educate yourself / your staff further on these topics. You may visit www.mymef.org or contact info@mymef.org to find out what information or training opportunities we currently have available in this regard.

No Student Left Behind

As Chassidim of the Rebbe, we know that המעשה הוא העיקר, and that a sigh about the issues our students have is not enough. With this in mind, we have developed protocol for dealing with students in crisis, so that no student should chas v'sholom be left without help in a crisis.

Protocol for Students in Crisis and Pre-Crisis

The protocol below was developed with the help and feedback of many mechanchos and mental health professionals who understand the need for schools to provide appropriate care and referrals for children in crisis.

This protocol assumes the following pre-requisite conditions:

1. The school has a trusted Rav who has a good understanding of and experience in dealing with complex family situations and mental and emotional health issues
2. The school employs or contracts with a licensed mental health professional
3. The school has a mechaneches system where there is at least one designated school staff member who works directly with students outside of the classroom. This person does not have to be a mental health professional, but she must have ongoing training in dealing with various types of mental health crises.
4. The highest standards of confidentiality are maintained and students know with absolute certainty that keeping confidences is a high priority for all staff members.
5. The school has a designated individual, preferably the mechaneches or a principal, who contacts parents sensitively to discuss student crisis situations
6. The school administrators have complete trust in the mechaneches and guidance staff to deal with crisis situations and do not demand to be informed of details of a situation except on a need-to-know basis.
7. The school maintains a current list of available and competent frum and reputable mental health professionals as well as rehab facilities and prevention/intervention organizations.
8. All children must have emergency forms on file in the school office which include signed consent by parents for treatment a child's physical and mental health emergencies. A visiting child should have an emergency form in the office.

A. Identifying the student in crisis

There are many indicators that a student is in crisis. Below is a partial list of behaviors that may indicate a student in crisis. Many students in crisis will exhibit more than one of the behaviors listed.

Please take note if a student :

- Is chronically late to school
- Is chronically absent
- chronically cuts classes
- doesn't hand in any assignments
- refuses to daven
- consistently fails tests
- cannot sit still in class
- cannot focus for an entire class period

- panics/shuts down when she doesn't understand information in class or instructions on an assignment or test
- cries easily
- chronically lies
- expresses anger often
- does not engage socially with other students
- does not make eye contact
- appears chronically tired or sleepy
- regularly has bloodshot eyes
- spends excessive amounts of time in the rest room
- is losing a lot of weight
- is gaining a lot of weight
- talks to others about hurting or killing herself
- wears many layers of clothing/inappropriate for weather
- has poor grooming/hygiene
- talks about suicide
- mentions having a plan about suicide
- engages in self harm
- exhibits self-destructive behavior patterns

The above-mentioned behaviors and signs may in and of themselves not be cause for concern. However, combinations of several behaviors may point to a crisis situation.

Any student can have occasional lapses in behavior or mood.

When identifying students in crisis, we look for two elements:

- **Patterns of behavior**
- **“Crisis outcry”**

Patterns of behavior include the frequency and regularity of a particular behavior. An example of this would be a student that avoids davening unless a particular teacher is in the room, or a student who only comes to school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These types of patterns may indicate anxiety or post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Crisis outcry is when a student behaves in a way that very obviously shows she is in pain. Sometimes a student speaks to a staff member or fellow student about trauma, anxiety, depression or a troubling situation taking place in or out of school. Very often, the student will choose to tell someone whom they a) trust and b) know cannot solve the problem. This is a show of her ambiguity about revealing her crisis; she wants someone to know, yet is afraid of the fallout of bringing the issue to the attention of an authority figure.

In all cases where we have identified the student as being in crisis, action needs to be taken. A child in crisis is a child in pain and she is relying on the adults in her world to lead her to healing.

B. Getting the student help

Every individual in crisis has a unique path to healing, and therefore there is no “one size fits all” fix. However, there are certain steps that must be taken to ensure that the student is not in any imminent danger, and that there is no imminent danger to anyone she knows. Therefore, once a student has been identified as being in crisis the following steps must be taken:

1. The teacher who is aware of the crisis speaks to the student in a private place about going for help. This must be done with the utmost sensitivity and discretion. Children in crisis often have trust issues, and therefore may take time to become ok with this idea. Say to the student: "This is a very heavy burden to carry by yourself. It's time to speak to someone who can help. If you are not comfortable going alone, I am happy to go with you."
2. Immediately schedule an appointment with the guidance counselor or mechaneches. It is best if the meeting with the guidance person can be done the same day, minimizing opportunities for the student to lose her nerve and change her mind about opening up.
3. Guidance counselor/Mechaneches interviews the student who made crisis outcry to identify crisis type and severity and rule out imminent danger to the student or anyone else.
4. Guidance person notifies parent/guardian that there is a crisis. If chas v'sholom the crisis involves abuse *by* a parent, a Rav must be consulted regarding whether child protective services may be contacted.
5. Guidance person assists family or school/community personnel with crisis intervention (ex: providing outside counseling referrals).
6. Guidance person keeps an accurate written record of time frames and actions taken to deal with the crisis. This is called a crisis report. The crisis report is stored in a locked file cabinet that is accessible by authorized personnel only. If the crisis report is done in an online format, it should be maintained in a confidential file format, that is accessible to authorized personnel only.
7. In the event that there is imminent danger to someone involved, law enforcement or medical professionals may need to be contacted. Once again, a Rav should be consulted if there is any doubt about Halachic issues.
8. Follow-up with the student within 48 hours after crisis intervention. Maintain contact with the parents, who will likely need continued guidance and refer them to appropriate professionals or agencies.

School-Specific Protocols:

Resources

Your Local / School Mental Health and Crisis Resources:

- 1) Name: _____ Position: _____ Area of Specialty: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Notes: _____
- 2) Name: _____ Position: _____ Area of Specialty: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Notes: _____
- 3) Name: _____ Position: _____ Area of Specialty: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Notes: _____
- 4) Name: _____ Position: _____ Area of Specialty: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Notes: _____
- 5) Name: _____ Position: _____ Area of Specialty: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ Notes: _____

Here is a partial list of organizations that offer help and guidance:

Chai Lifeline Project Chai Crisis Intervention

Yisroel Davidsohn

646-529-1351

NCFJE/Operation Survival Substance Abuse Prevention

Yaacov Behrman

718-735-0200

Amudim

Substance abuse intervention

646-517-0222

Neshamos.org

Rabbi Meir New / Mrs. Chaviva New

718-228-4448

ASAP

Counseling funding for Sexual Abuse Victims

Admin@asap.care

Rachel's place - Shelter for teenage girls ages 16-21

Aviva Feiler

917-685-7214

Project YESS

Rabbi Yaacov Horowitz

Avi Fishoff

Twisted Parenting

718-902-6666

M.A.S.K. (Mothers and Fathers Aligned Saving Kids)

Info@maskparents.org

718-758-0400

Relief – mental health referral services

Reliefhelp.org

718 431 9501

Ella Steinmetz-Simon / *Leigh Loffee*

Gelt Charitable Foundation—Suicide Prevention Training

941-928-2220 / <https://www.geltcharitable.foundation>

Rabbi Yarden Blumstein

Suicide Prevention Training