

DEAR PARENTS, STAFF AND COMMUNITY;

AFTER AN EVENT LIKE THE ONE WE EXPERIENCED TODAY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN TO HELP THEM PROCESS WHAT HAPPENED AND ASSIST THEM TO RECOVER A SENSE OF SAFETY AND STABILITY. TO THAT END, BELOW YOU WILL FIND TIPS ABOUT HOW TO SPEAK WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND WAYS TO RESPOND. THE FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL HAVE STAFF AVAILABLE NEXT WEEK TO ASSIST YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN. IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S RESPONSE TO THESE EVENTS, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT STAFF AT YOUR SCHOOL TO ASSIST YOU.

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) INDICATES SEVERAL TIPS FOR PARENTS TO CONSIDER:

- **TALK WITH YOUR CHILD - IF CHILDREN ASK QUESTIONS, TALKING TO THEM ABOUT THEIR WORRIES AND CONCERNS IS THE FIRST STEP TO HELP THEM FEEL SAFE AND BEGIN TO COPE WITH THE EVENTS OCCURRING AROUND THEM. WHAT YOU TALK ABOUT AND HOW YOU SAY IT DOES DEPEND ON THEIR AGE, BUT ALL CHILDREN NEED TO BE ABLE TO KNOW YOU ARE THERE AND LISTENING TO THEM.**
- **KEEP HOME A SAFE PLACE - CHILDREN, REGARDLESS OF AGE, OFTEN FIND HOME TO BE A SAFE HAVEN WHEN THE WORLD AROUND THEM BECOMES OVERWHELMING. DURING TIMES OF CRISIS, IT IS**

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT YOUR CHILDREN MAY COME HOME SEEKING THE SAFE FEELING THEY HAVE BEING THERE.

- WATCH FOR SIGNS OF STRESS, FEAR OR ANXIETY - AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT, IT IS TYPICAL FOR CHILDREN (AND ADULTS) TO EXPERIENCE A WIDE RANGE OF EMOTIONS INCLUDING FEARFULNESS, SHOCK, ANGER, GRIEF AND ANXIETY. YOUR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORS MAY CHANGE BECAUSE OF THEIR RESPONSE TO AN EVENT. THEY MAY EXPERIENCE TROUBLE SLEEPING, DIFFICULTY WITH CONCENTRATING ON SCHOOLWORK, OR CHANGES IN APPETITE.

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT POINTS TO HELP YOU, AS PARENTS, COMMUNICATE IN THE COMING DAYS.

1. REASSURE CHILDREN THAT THEY ARE SAFE. EMPHASIZE THAT SCHOOLS ARE VERY SAFE. VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS. EXPLAIN THAT ALL FEELINGS ARE OKAY WHEN TRAUMATIC SITUATIONS OCCUR. LET CHILDREN TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS, HELP PUT THEM INTO PERSPECTIVE, AND ASSIST THEM IN EXPRESSING THESE FEELINGS APPROPRIATELY.

2. MAKE TIME TO TALK. LET THEIR QUESTIONS BE YOUR GUIDE AS TO HOW MUCH INFORMATION TO PROVIDE. BE PATIENT. CHILDREN AND YOUTH DO NOT ALWAYS TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS READILY.

3. KEEP YOUR EXPLANATIONS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE.

- **EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN NEED BRIEF, SIMPLE INFORMATION THAT SHOULD BE BALANCED WITH REASSURANCES THAT THEIR SCHOOL AND HOMES ARE SAFE AND THAT ADULTS ARE THERE TO PROTECT THEM.**

- **UPPER ELEMENTARY AND EARLY MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN WILL BE MORE VOCAL IN ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THEY TRULY ARE SAFE AND WHAT IS BEING DONE AT THEIR SCHOOL. THEY MAY NEED ASSISTANCE SEPARATING REALITY FROM FANTASY. DISCUSS EFFORTS OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO PROVIDE SAFE SCHOOLS.**

- **UPPER MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL HAVE STRONG AND VARYING OPINIONS ABOUT THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY. THEY WILL SHARE CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO MAKE SCHOOL SAFER AND HOW TO PREVENT TRAGEDIES IN SOCIETY. EMPHASIZE THE ROLE THAT STUDENTS HAVE IN MAINTAINING SAFE SCHOOLS BY FOLLOWING SCHOOL SAFETY GUIDELINES COMMUNICATING ANY PERSONAL**

SAFETY CONCERNS TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, AND ACCESSING SUPPORT FOR EMOTIONAL NEEDS.

4. REVIEW SAFETY PROCEDURES. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE PROCEDURES AND SAFEGUARDS AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME. HELP CHILDREN IDENTIFY AT LEAST ONE ADULT AT SCHOOL AND IN THE COMMUNITY TO WHOM THEY GO IF THEY FEEL THREATENED OR AT RISK.

5. OBSERVE CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL STATE. SOME CHILDREN MAY NOT EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS VERBALLY. CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR, APPETITE, AND SLEEP PATTERNS CAN INDICATE A CHILD'S LEVEL OF ANXIETY OR DISCOMFORT. IN MOST CHILDREN, THESE SYMPTOMS WILL EASE WITH REASSURANCE AND TIME. HOWEVER, SOME CHILDREN MAY BE AT RISK FOR MORE INTENSE REACTIONS. CHILDREN WHO HAVE HAD A PAST TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE OR PERSONAL LOSS, SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION OR OTHER MENTAL ILLNESS, OR WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MAY BE AT GREATER RISK FOR SEVERE REACTIONS THAN OTHERS. SEEK THE HELP OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL IF YOU ARE AT ALL CONCERNED.

6. MAINTAIN A NORMAL ROUTINE. KEEPING TO A REGULAR SCHEDULE CAN BE REASSURING AND PROMOTE PHYSICAL HEALTH. ENSURE THAT CHILDREN GET PLENTY OF SLEEP, REGULAR MEALS, AND EXERCISE. ENCOURAGE THEM TO KEEP UP WITH THEIR SCHOOLWORK AND

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BUT DON'T PUSH THEM IF THEY SEEM
OVERWHELMED.**

**IF AT ANY TIME YOU FEEL YOUR CHILD NEEDS MORE ASSISTANCE, OR YOU
NEED ASSISTANCE PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SCHOOL AND SEEK HELP.**

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP EACH AND EVERY CHILD AND EACH OTHER.