

Memorandum of Understanding for School Crisis Counseling Mutual Aid

This Memorandum of Understanding addresses agreements between the Berkshire County Superintendent's Roundtable, the Berkshire County School Counselors Association (BCSCA), and the Berkshire County School Adjustment Counselors Association (BCSAC).

Date: May 4, 2015

Purpose: Crises or disasters of a large scale that occur within a school district may overwhelm the resources of that district. The rural and geographic nature of Berkshire County adds additional challenges. It is best to be prepared for the possibility of such an occurrence by entering into mutual aid agreements with other school districts. Such agreements help schools offer services to each other following major crises or disasters. State law requires all school districts to establish crisis response teams and multi-hazard emergency response plans. It is expected that each school will manage their own crises using their school safety plan. This agreement addresses those infrequent occurrences that overtax the resources of the school district to the point where outside help is needed. This agreement may serve as a functional annex to the school emergency plan addressing psychological recovery of students and staff. An example of a potential crisis that could warrant the activation of mutual aid might be a tragic bus accident causing the death of several students and staff at one school. Such an incident would impact all the schools in the district because of connected family members and friendships. In Berkshire County, neighboring districts may also experience significant impact.

Agreement:

1. Each individual school district has the responsibility to manage response to its own crises. Additionally, it is the district administration's responsibility to determine when the resources of the district are no longer adequate to deal with a situation. It is the administration's responsibility to ask for assistance if the need is indicated.
2. When school crisis counseling mutual aid is desired, the requesting administrator may:
 - Request services via email to the superintendent's roundtable email list
 - Directly contact neighboring districts via the superintendent's office, cell phone or email
 - Ask their school adjustment counselor, school psychologist or school guidance counselor to reach out to other districts via the BCSAC and/or BCSCA email and/or phone lists
3. The requesting administrator will indicate what type of help is requested, when it is needed, and the location.
4. The selection of school districts to contact to request aid may be based on geographic considerations or other considerations (i.e. districts that have not yet provided assistance).

5. When a school adjustment counselor, school psychologist or school guidance counselor is contacted directly by another district, she/he will seek permission from her/his supervisor to respond.
6. The responding district administrators will determine the number of counselors that can be spared and will recruit counselors to provide mutual aid.
7. The requesting district will assign an onsite professional staff member to serve as the liaison to the mutual aid counselor(s).
8. Counselors recruited to provide mutual aid will be credentialed counselors who are currently licensed by DESE as a school adjustment counselor, school guidance counselor, or school psychologist. Generally speaking, staff that have been trained in crisis response will be deployed.
9. Counselors providing mutual aid will be available to provide crisis counseling and psychological first aid to students and staff members.
10. If a student presents with concerns of suicide, self-harm, harm towards others, child abuse, or other safety issues, the out of district counselor will immediately refer the student back to the in district counselor who will be responsible for assessing and providing services to that student.
11. Responding districts will be responsible for providing their counselors with their normal pay and benefits, including workman's compensation, liability insurance, and any other worker benefits during the time that they are providing mutual aid at the requesting school.
12. Responding districts will provide assistance for one or two days. If it is anticipated that further assistance might be needed beyond two days, or, if it is determined that the scope of the crisis is beyond the limitations of the mutual aid agreement, the requesting district should immediately contact the Brien Center to activate the Berkshire Trauma Response Network (BTRN). BTRN can provide critical incident debriefing services that are generally in place several days after a traumatic event. To request BTRN services, contact XXXXX at the Brien Center at XXX-XXX-XXXX (work cell) or contact the Crisis Team and ask to speak to the administrator on call at XXX-XXX-XXXX.
13. The Berkshire County Superintendent's Roundtable and the Professional Learning Networks for School Adjustment Counselors, School Psychologists, and School Guidance Counselors will seek out and support professional development for mutual aid counselors in crisis counseling and psychological first aid.
14. The following school districts agree to participate by both contributing and receiving mutual aid.

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District
Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter
Berkshire Hills Regional School District
Central Berkshire Regional School District
Farmington River Regional School District
Lee Public Schools
Lenox Public Schools
McCann Technical School
Mt. Greylock RSD, Williamstown & Lanesboro
North Adams Public Schools

North Berkshire School Union (Clarksburg, Florida & Savoy)
Pittsfield Public Schools
Shaker Mt. School Union (# 70): Richmond, Hancock & New Ashford
Southern Berkshire Regional School District
St. Joseph Central High School

Term: This memorandum will be in force on the date signed below, and will be self-renewing. This memorandum will be reviewed annually. Districts that no longer wish to participate shall notify, in writing, the Berkshire County Superintendent's Roundtable.

The signatures below indicate an agreement to abide by this Memorandum of Understanding for crisis response to school districts, pledges cooperation and problem-solving, and agrees to respond appropriately for the good of the participating school districts.

President, Berkshire County Superintendent's Roundtable

Coordinator, Berkshire County School Counselor Association (Guidance PLN)

Coordinator, Berkshire County School Adjustment Counselor Association (SAC PLN)

Note: Adapted from *PREPaRE School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum*, National Association of School Psychologists