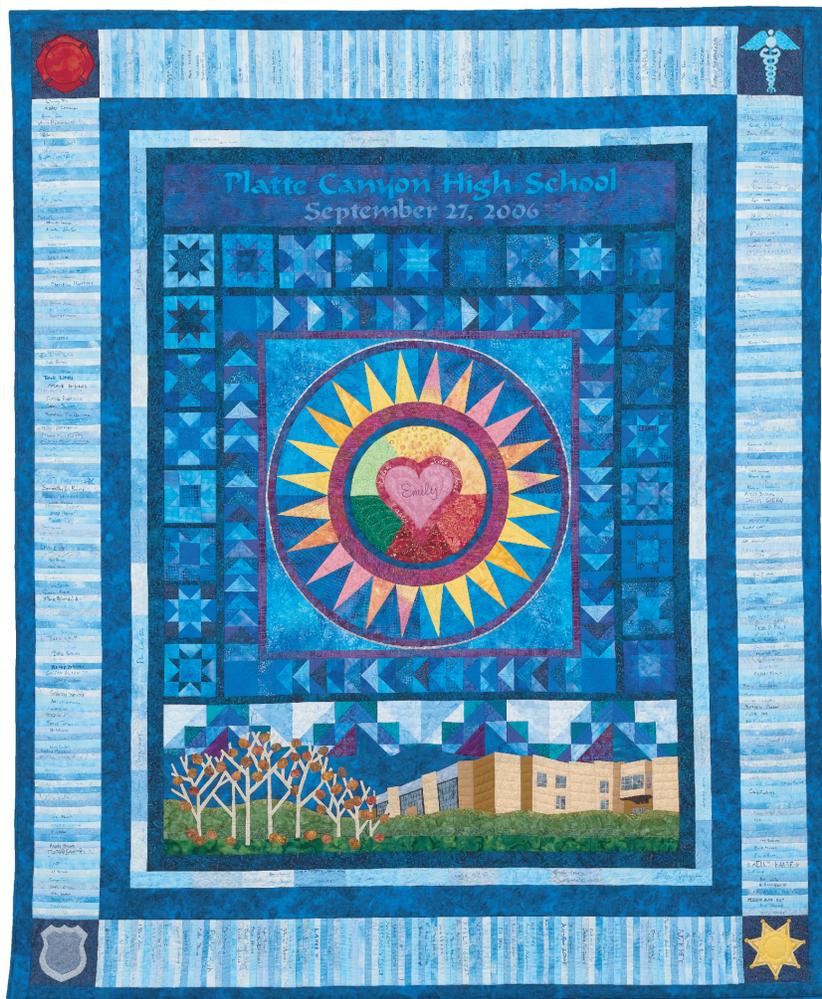


# LESSONS LEARNED

## A Victim Assistance Perspective

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2006 Tragedy  
at Platte Canyon High School  
Bailey, Colorado



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## Acknowledgments

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Thank you to the members of the Bailey community for their input into this report. We are especially grateful to the numerous people involved from the local, state and national perspectives who took the time to share their experiences, thoughts and lessons through face-to-face meetings, phone interviews and online surveys.

A special thank you to:

- ▶ the first responders and Victim Services providers who spent endless hours helping victims
- ▶ the community members who provided ongoing care and support
- ▶ the Platte Canyon School District staff who were especially sensitive to the needs of the students and their families

### **About the Cover**

The quilt, in memory of Emily Keyes, was designed by the six girls held hostage during the tragedy and sewn by Platte Canyon High School students and staff. It was donated by the Great American Quilt Factory in Denver. *(For a brochure about the quilt, see Appendix G.)*

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The points of view expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



*LESSONS LEARNED: A VICTIM ASSISTANCE PERSPECTIVE*  
**Platte Canyon High School Tragedy, Sept. 27, 2006**

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**Table of Contents**

Section I. Introduction..... 1

Section II. Background..... 2

Section III. Executive Summary ..... 3

Section IV. Recommendations..... 4

Section V. Victim Assistance..... 5

Section VI. Community Response ..... 9

Section VII. Lessons Learned ..... 12

Section VIII. Appendices..... 15

    A. Interview log ..... 15

    B. Interview questions ..... 16

    C. Online survey results ..... 17

        1. Student..... 17

        2. Staff..... 22

        3. Parents ..... 27

    D. Grants received..... 32

    E. Contacts ..... 33

    F. Web resources..... 34

    G. Sample materials ..... 35

        1. Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance ..... 35

        2. School District..... 40

        3. Pikes Peak Mental Health..... 42

        4. PCHS Quilt..... 43



## Section I. Introduction

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On Sept. 27, 2006, a gunman entered Platte Canyon High School, a rural mountain high school in Colorado, held seven female students hostage and killed one student. His actions had a profound impact on the school, the School District and the community. Victim services agencies at the local and state levels played a critical role in the aftermath of the tragedy.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, as part of a grant awarded to the Platte Canyon School District and Pikes Peak Mental Health, funded the development of this report, whose purpose is to focus on lessons learned in victim services as a result of this tragedy in Bailey, Colorado. The goal is to guide communities throughout the nation in how victim services agencies can best prepare for and respond to similar tragedies in their communities.

A broad-based committee of local and state service providers gathered to provide oversight and direction for the development of this report. The committee included representatives from Platte Canyon School District, Park County Sheriff's Office, Park County Victim Services, Pikes Peak Mental Health, the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Organization of Victim Assistance and other state and Park County agencies.

The committee determined who should be interviewed, what questions should be asked, and how the information should be gathered. The committee decided that primary research should be conducted through:

- ▶ Face-to-face individual interviews
- ▶ Small group interviews
- ▶ Phone conversations
- ▶ Online surveys

A complete list of the interviewees can be found in *Appendix A*, a list of the survey questions in *Appendix B* and results of the online surveys in *Appendix C*. To protect confidentiality, interviewees are listed by role rather than by name. Throughout this report, attributions are also made by role rather than by specific person.

A consultant with experience in school and crisis communications was hired to manage the project, including conducting interviews, designing and disseminating surveys and writing the report.

## Section II. Background

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Platte Canyon High School is located just off U.S. Highway 285 outside of the town of Bailey, Colorado, about 45 miles southwest of Denver. The school is located in Park County, a rural county encompassing 2,200 square miles.

The school campus includes the School District's administrative offices, a public swimming pool, and the high school/middle school building. Platte Canyon High School serves about 480 students in grades 9-12 and is connected by a hallway to Fitzsimmons Middle School, which serves about 300 students in grades 6-8.

On Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2006, at approximately 11:40 a.m. an unknown male, later identified as Duane Morrison, armed with a handgun and carrying a backpack, entered Platte Canyon High School and went into a second floor English classroom. He discharged the firearm, demanded that the female teacher, male students and several female students leave the room and held seven female students hostage. There were reports that he had explosives, which he threatened to detonate. In addition to the Park County Sheriff's Office, responders included the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Colorado State Patrol and Clear Creek County Sheriff's Office. The remaining classrooms in the high school and middle school were evacuated by law enforcement officers. Five of the seven hostages were released during the next few hours.

Morrison indicated that the event would be over at 4 p.m., and law enforcement assumed he was going to detonate the explosives. At 3:35 p.m., law enforcement initiated entry into the classroom. One hostage successfully escaped, and the last hostage, Emily Keyes, was shot by Morrison. She later died at an area hospital. Morrison was shot by the officers and also shot himself. He died at the scene.

The evacuated students were taken by school bus to Deer Creek Elementary School, located about 10 minutes from the high school, where they were reunited with their families. Counselors were available at the site.

"What made me feel safe was I knew there was a plan in place and a good relationship between the Sheriff's Department and the school," a parent said.

The next morning, school staff members met as a group at a local church and received information from the superintendent, school administrators and law enforcement officers. They also received updates about next steps and advice from volunteer consultants. Mental health workers were on site to provide both individual and group counseling services as needed.

The church was also opened as a community center on a drop-in basis. Students and their parents gathered at the church to support each other. They had the opportunity to meet with mental health providers if they desired. These meetings continued for several days.

The school was closed for five days to allow law enforcement to complete its investigation and to permit cleanup of the affected classrooms. The day before classes resumed, the school was opened for students and parents to retrieve belongings and become comfortable re-entering the building. On Oct. 5, middle and high school students returned to class, and about 45 professional mental health counselors from a number of state and local agencies were on call in every classroom. In addition, counselors were available in the school offices. If a teacher or volunteer counselor noticed a student who was struggling, that student was brought to the counseling office for private or group counseling. The volunteers also looked for behavioral and emotional "red flags" and provided school staff with lists of students who needed additional assistance. There were some students who were not ready to return to normal classroom activities, and those students received immediate counseling support. Students could be referred to outside counselors if needed.

## Section III. Executive Summary

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A shooting in a small, rural mountain community makes every resident feel violated because it's shocking in its unexpected, violent disruption of everyday life. "The women felt victimized; the men helpless," one community leader said. "We felt powerless if we couldn't even keep our kids safe," another said.

In a small community, there are multiple impacts because people work together, play together and worship together. Lives intersect on a daily basis: The Sheriff announces the high school football games; a Deputy coaches the swim team; a School Board member's spouse works at the school; a small restaurant owner employs high school students.

The upside is that the intertwining, long-standing relationships build respect and trust. Because Bailey is a close-knit community, everyone — from the businesses to the churches to the schools — pulled together immediately. This cohesiveness was an incredible asset as the community moved from the tragedy to the healing process.

The relationship between the School District and the Sheriff's Office was solid, so the two entities could work together seamlessly from the onset of the tragedy forward. The Sheriff's Office had run a practice drill in the high school just weeks before the shooting, and everyone knew exactly how to respond. The Park County Victim Services Office had a working relationship with the School District, and a level of trust was already established, so Victim Services could provide immediate and ongoing support to students, parents and school staff.

The biggest problem for Bailey, as for any rural community when a tragedy like this one strikes, was the lack of financial and human resources. Both the Sheriff's Office and the School District run on lean budgets, and without the support of state and federal grants, they would have been hard-pressed to offer the ongoing services that were necessary to meet the needs of the community in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Coordinated through the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, a number of short- and long-term grants were successfully obtained to deal with safety and security issues as well as mental health needs and victim compensation. (*See Appendix D for list of grants.*)

In terms of human resources, mental health providers from neighboring jurisdictions and the state were able to join forces with the Park County staff to bolster manpower. Through interagency cooperation, a rapid, efficient, effective response was provided to meet the mental health needs of the community.

## Section IV. Recommendations

As part of crisis planning, school districts and victim services agencies should take the lead in conducting an assessment of what resources (human and financial) will be needed to help the community heal, with special emphasis on serving victims. One suggestion is to conduct this assessment during the summer and incorporate it into the overall safety planning for the upcoming school year.

### Mental health resources

When considering mental health issues, it is important to plan for both immediate and long-term needs of the victims, first responders and the larger community. It is also valuable to have available abundant written materials/Web sites that provide information for a variety of audiences (staff, students, parents, first responders) on dealing with and recovering from a crisis. In developing a plan, consider:

- ▶ Local resources: Inventory what services are available in the community.
  - Victim services through local law enforcement
  - Community mental health agencies
  - Community nonprofit organizations
  - Private providers
  - School-based counselors
  
- ▶ External resources: What outside resources can be tapped?
  - State agencies
  - State and national victim assistance programs
  - School- and community-based counselors from neighboring communities
  - Private mental health providers
  - National experts
  - Professional mental health organizations
  - Nonprofit organizations
  - Specialists in post-traumatic stress

Because relationships are so critical in times of crisis, it is best if these groups meet on a regular basis, develop crisis plans and protocols together, and get to know each other's strengths and resources.

### Financial resources

A crisis creates a demand for additional financial resources to cover such expenses as counselors, substitute teachers, safety and security staff and hardware, communications support, special activities and financial assistance for victims.

- ▶ Grants — Potential sources of federal grants for school crises include:
  - U.S. Department of Education SERV Grants
  - U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime
  - VALE, Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement (administered by the District Attorneys' offices)
- ▶ School funding — Insurance, contingency funds, capital fund expenditures
- ▶ Private funding — Grants can be obtained from private foundations.
- ▶ Donations — Often after a tragedy, many people — near and far — wish to make donations to the school or to the victims. It is critical that good tracking procedures are established immediately to ensure the funds are used appropriately, and there is accountability. At Platte Canyon, friends of the Keyes family immediately started the I Love U Guys Foundation (*see page 8*) and worked closely with school officials to determine how to collect and distribute funds.

## Section V. Victim Assistance: Short- and Long-Term Efforts

Within hours of the crisis unfolding at Platte Canyon High School, numerous local and state agencies responded to the scene to assist with mental health needs of the students, school staff, first responders and the Bailey community.

### Responding mental health/crisis response agencies:

▶ Park County Victim Services — Under the auspices of the Park County Sheriff's Office, this department works with victims of crime. It employs one full-time and two part-time staff members and has 16 trained volunteers. Victim Services took a lead role in working with the victims of the tragedy, including the hostages and the first responders.\*

- ▶ Park County Division of Human Services \*
- ▶ Pikes Peak Mental Health\*
- ▶ Mountain Peace Shelter — a nonprofit community organization \*
- ▶ Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Victim Services Unit
- ▶ Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA)
- ▶ Colorado State Patrol, Victims' Assistance Unit
- ▶ Colorado Division of Mental Health
- ▶ Jefferson Center for Mental Health
- ▶ Platte Canyon School District counselors\*
- ▶ Jefferson County School District counselors
- ▶ Private providers

\*These agencies are either permanently located or have an ongoing presence in the Bailey community.

### Short-term mental health services

▶ Two 24-hour hotlines, manned by volunteers, were established immediately — one for people needing help, the other for those wanting to provide help. Fliers were distributed throughout the community at businesses, churches and schools to advertise these phone numbers. The hotline received about 300 calls, almost equally distributed between those wanting to give and receive help. The hotlines were staffed by Mountain Peace Shelter staff and volunteers, Park County Victim Advocate volunteers, and volunteers from the VALE Board (Victims Assistance and Law Enforcement) from Canon City. A training session was organized for new volunteers, and a trained person answered the phone lines for several weeks. Later, an answering service took over with a "live" voice rather than a recording for at least six months. The hotline was "live" again for a couple of weeks around the first anniversary of the tragedy. Although the first anniversary didn't generate a lot of phone calls, a number of concerned parents, students and school staff called to talk about issues and needs.

▶ First responders had access to mental health services starting the night of the tragedy. Park County Victim Services and the Department of Human Services coordinated this support. A staff member from Pikes Peak Mental Health met late that night with first responders at a nearby fire station.

▶ Park County Victim Services provided immediate support to families gathered at the Sheriff Substation in Bailey.

▶ Victim advocate volunteers and staff from the Department of Human Services were at the high school during and immediately after the evacuation.

▶ Counselors from Platte Canyon High School and Jefferson County Public Schools were available at the student/parent unification site at Deer Creek Middle School the afternoon of the tragedy.

▶ Mental health services were provided by numerous agencies starting the day after the tragedy at the local church where students and staff gathered.

▶ Each hostage was immediately assigned an advocate who provided ongoing services — including mental health support and financial aid — to the girls and their families.

## **Physical/Medical Needs**

▶ Additional nursing support was provided to deal with the increased physical/medical needs of the students caused by the trauma.

## **Financial support**

(For a full listing of grants received, see Appendix D)

- ▶ The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice became the clearinghouse for grant applications.
- ▶ Immediate funding of \$49,871 was received from a U.S. Department of Education SERV grant for needs at the school, including counseling and substitute teachers.
- ▶ Grants for victim compensation and services were made available through federal and state sources.
- ▶ State and federal law enforcement grants funded additional security needs, including officers at both school districts in Park County.
- ▶ Other funding was made available through private sources. "They flew my son home from college so he could be there for his sister," one parent reported.

## **Other short-term services**

- ▶ A Web site was established by the School District to provide immediate, up-to-date information for the short- and long-term. This site was developed with assistance from Jefferson County Public Schools.
- ▶ A communications plan was developed through the services of a volunteer public relations consultant to help the community heal; to inform the school community about District decisions in a timely, accurate manner; and to inform and involve the school community regarding safety and security measures.
- ▶ Sheriff's Office: There was an increased law enforcement presence in the parking lots and school buildings.
- ▶ Written materials to provide crisis information to parents, teachers and students were made available. (See resources, Appendices F and G). The materials included:
  - Mental Health Responder Resource Packet, prepared by state and local mental health agencies, was distributed to all counselors who helped the first day back at school and included talking points for teachers and handouts on trauma and post-traumatic stress.
  - Fliers explaining signs that indicate someone needs assistance and where to go for help, including the phone numbers for the specially established hotlines.
  - Materials from victim advocate organizations, including COVA and the Colorado State Patrol, such as handouts about Tips for Parents and Family Members; Victim and Witness Reactions to Trauma; Trauma Recovery Tips; Helping Children and Teens Cope with Trauma; Tips for Students; Your Rights with the Press; Understanding Your Grief; and Critical Incident Stress Reactions.

## **Community support systems**

The community joined forces to support each other from the first day. People showed their support by bringing food, knitting scarves, making donations, and wrapping pink ribbons around sign posts throughout the community. Support systems included:

- ▶ Local churches — Youth ministers at local churches offered a wide variety of activities for students and their families. Many people depended on their ministers to provide faith-based counselors. "My husband would not have gone to counseling if it weren't faith based," one parent said. Among the contributions that the faith community made were:
  - Provided meeting space for students and staff.
  - Involved students in positive activities.
  - Invited deputies to speak about what happened.
  - Provided hand-knit scarves to all students and staff.
  - Donated gift baskets to hostages.

▶ Columbine High School staff and community — The principal of Columbine High School (site of a school shooting in 1999) and his staff visited Platte Canyon, bringing lunch and gifts for the Platte Canyon staff. “Talking to someone else who had gone through it was so valuable,” a teacher said.

▶ Retired school administrators — Within a couple of days of the tragedy, the Platte Canyon superintendent recruited a cadre of retired school administrators from the Denver metro area to call every parent in the School District to offer sympathy, assistance and support. The administrators recorded a one-word reaction from each family so the School District knew how people were coping.

▶ Colorado Education Association — The state teachers’ association staff and officers visited the Platte Canyon teachers, offering counsel and support.

▶ Business community — The business community showed its support through signs in store windows, and donations of food and beverages.

▶ John Michael and Ellen Keyes — Because of the positive and gracious response of the parents whose daughter was killed, the community healed more quickly. “The Keyes set an example of kindness, not hate,” a parent said. “They facilitated our healing,” a community member said. The Keyes family and their friends immediately started the I Love U Guys Foundation to provide support for positive community activities. (See page 8.)

▶ Random Acts of Kindness — The high school started a program that encouraged students to be kind to others in Emily’s memory. “It was a beam of light,” a parent said.

▶ Parents about School Safety — Parent and community volunteers manned the entryways to the schools, signing in visitors and providing badges. This effort not only provided more security to students, but also gave parents a positive, constructive way to help.

### **Ongoing services and activities**

After the initial crisis response occurs, it is critical to provide ongoing, long-term services and activities that aid in the healing process. These services may be needed for a year or more after the tragedy.

### **Mental health**

▶ Park County Victim Services and Pikes Peak Mental Health continued to offer mental health services to first responders, students and community members.

▶ Some School District staff members received services through Workers’ Compensation.

▶ School staff and students took advantage of such techniques as biofeedback and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). A volunteer trauma therapist provided the services, which were so successful that she was asked to return for additional assistance, funded through grant monies.

▶ Dr. David Schonfeld, Dr. Dan Nelson and Dr. Marlene Wong of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement visited Bailey in December 2006 and January 2007. They met with teachers, administrators and parents. In addition, they remained in phone contact with school administrators on an ongoing basis to provide advice on special events and issues of concern. This help was very well received by both parents and staff.

▶ Pikes Peak Mental Health provided a full-time counselor to work at the high school and middle school. Funded through a grant, she will continue at the school through spring 2009. Her work includes individual and group counseling. In the first year, one group was made up of the girls who had been held hostage, while a coed group of Emily’s friends also had regular meetings. Students also met as a CARE group, taking on positive community projects.

▶ A Web site, cosponsored with the University of Colorado Trauma, Health & Hazards Center and the Colorado Department of Human Services, was designed to help the members of the Bailey community learn about and cope with traumatic stress reactions. It has practical advice about how to reduce stress and anxiety.

### **Healing**

▶ Platte Canyon Drop-In Center, which opened in February 2007, is designed to provide students with a safe and nurturing environment. Located in downtown Bailey, it serves middle and high school students. The School District provides free school bus rides after school to the center. The center offers a variety of activities, an opportunity to spend time with friends and homework help. An advisory

board, composed of students, community members and involved agencies, provides guidance to the daily operation of the center.

- ▶ Students had the opportunity to take self-defense classes from a local expert. “He gave me back what that horrible man tried to take away from me,” one hostage said.
- ▶ Student enrollment remained stable after the tragedy.
- ▶ A quilt in memory of Emily Keyes was designed by the six girls held hostage during the tragedy and sewn by staff and AP English students at the suggestion of English teacher Sandra Smith. The quilt was donated by the Great American Quilt Factory in Denver.
- ▶ The Park County Victim Services Office worked with the School District and community groups to plan events to commemorate the first anniversary of the shooting. Elementary and middle school students did projects with the theme of “acts of kindness” at their school. The high school students met at the Farmers Union where they participated in a wide range of community service activities. In the evening, a community barbecue and remembrance were held.

### **The I Love U Guys Foundation**

Friends of the Keyes family immediately formed the I Love U Guys Foundation, named in honor of Emily Keyes’ last text message to her family. The first act was to provide funds for victims. The mission of the foundation is “to restore and protect the joy of youth through educational programs and positive actions in collaboration with families, schools, communities, organizations and government entities.”

From the onset, the directors of the foundation, which include Emily’s parents, have worked closely with the School District and community agencies to ensure the funds are collected and distributed appropriately.

The foundation has established two major fund-raisers: the annual Emily’s Parade, a 37-mile motorcycle ride, and Emily’s Run, a 5K race. Each year, the foundation board determines how the funds will be distributed to support its mission. The first year, working with Park County Victim Services, the board distributed funds to the six student hostages who survived the incident. The second year, funds went to organizations that work on violence prevention activities. The third year, the parade benefited the National School Safety Collaborative, a program established by the Keyes family and their associates to use technology for improved school safety. In addition, funds have been provided for scholarships, teacher recognition and other local community organizations and activities. Local organizations may apply for grants through the foundation Web site.

### **Safety**

- ▶ The Colorado State Patrol Rubicon team completed a vulnerability assessment for the School District, which was used as the District updated its safety plan.
- ▶ The School District formed the School Safety Advisory Task Committee, composed of parents, staff and community members. This task force met for several months, conducted research, heard from safety experts, reviewed school safety surveys and developed a report that was presented to the Superintendent and Board of Education.
- ▶ Platte Canyon School District joined the Safe2Tell hotline program, a not-for-profit organization based on the Colorado Prevention Initiative for School Safety and funded by The Colorado Trust. Students, teachers, parents or any community member with a safety concern may call anonymously to make a report and help fight and prevent crime. The line is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the Colorado State Patrol communication center. To date, the hotline has received over 3,000 information and education calls and more than 700 reports resulting in investigations, early interventions and prevention of crimes.
- ▶ A new Parent Notification System was established to ensure that Platte Canyon School District can communicate with parents in a timely manner about issues affecting the schools and their students. The Immediate Response Information System (IRIS) allows the District to quickly send out messages by phone, pager and e-mail to all school families and staff. It can be used for school closings, attendance notifications and school emergencies.

## Section VI. Community Response to Services

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### ***What worked***

#### **Immediate counseling services**

Interviewees agreed almost unanimously that a wide variety of services were available right after the incident, and they were well publicized. Park County Victim Services took a lead role in working with the hostages, law enforcement officers and families. “They were amazing.” “They nailed it.” “The staff was incredible,” parents and teachers said.

The Park County Department of Human Services also provided immediate support. The county staff had a relationship with the superintendent, and the law enforcement officers, especially the Sheriff, were well known and liked by the community. It was helpful that victim advocates had jackets and T-shirts that identified them so parents knew whom to ask for help.

School counselors from Jefferson County and Platte Canyon Schools reported to Deer Creek Elementary where parents and students were reunited within hours of the tragedy.

Park County is served by Pikes Peak Mental Health, which has its main office in Colorado Springs, with some presence in Bailey. Pikes Peak immediately sent mental health workers in teams of two. On the first night, a team met with first responders. They also brought comfort through such supplies as water, snacks and tissues.

Law enforcement officers appreciated experts in police trauma who visited with them. Because many of the Park County officers had been involved in a domestic hostage situation earlier that week and never had time to debrief that situation, the tragedy at Platte Canyon High School hit them doubly hard.

#### **Interagency cooperation**

“When you’re in crisis, you don’t trust anybody. It’s important to have the relationships before the crisis,” one provider said.

The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice staff coordinated daily phone conference calls among all of the agencies involved in the aftermath of the shooting. The calls included representatives from Park County, Platte Canyon School District, Pikes Peak Mental Health, and other state and local agencies. During these calls, the agencies were able to talk about the previous day’s events, and what human and financial resources were needed. Later, weekly meetings were held to discuss what was needed for the long-term and what financial resources were available to meet these needs. “We tried to be really sensitive and to be there in a support role,” one state official said.

In the first days after the tragedy, each afternoon, mental health agencies met to plan for the following day. Each agency reported on what had occurred that day and whether there were specific individuals who needed additional support.

A staff member from the Colorado State Patrol was able to get such equipment as laptops, air cards and printers for use at the church in the days following the tragedy. She worked behind the scenes, assisting with phones in the Superintendent’s office.

#### **Grants**

*(For details, see Appendix D)*

The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice made available a number of different resources to assist

the victims, the students and their families, and the Park County community. In addition, the Division coordinated grant applications to help alleviate the paperwork burden for the School District.

Representatives of the U.S. Department of Education visited the School District within the first week to talk about resources and grants. An emergency SERV grant, which required limited paperwork, was immediately awarded.

While state and federal agencies tried to make the grant process as painless as possible, administering these funds can become an administrative onus for a small, understaffed school district such as Platte Canyon. The grants are restrictive, expenditures must be closely monitored and accounted for, and the grant year doesn't always match a school district's accounting year. "It is a half-time job managing the grants, even now, 18 months later," a school official said. One suggestion is to consider including a position of grant manager in the grant application.

### **Pre-planning**

The School District had an emergency plan in place, and it was carried out effectively. Parents said, "I knew my child was safe because I knew there was a plan." The Sheriff's Office had conducted an "active shooter" drill at the high school just weeks before the incident, so officers and teachers were prepared. The one glitch was that seven people — students and adults — were stranded in the school library because no one knew they were there. They tried to send e-mails but were unable to contact anyone who could help them. A laptop computer in the command post would enable school personnel to access e-mails in case students/staff need to reach them.

## **Challenges**

### **Confusion during the crisis**

When parents heard about the crisis situation through the media, many reported to the Sheriff's Substation in Bailey. There was no room to bring people inside, and so there was chaos in the parking lot. The Victim Services staff at the substation was unable to contact the Sheriff's deputies at the school, and they didn't have the information they would have liked to calm the frantic parents. A lesson was to ensure that Victim Services staff members are included in Incident Command training so they are familiar with the procedures and can take a more active role in the process.

Another concern was that when the first hostages were released, they were not identified immediately and just mingled with the general population of evacuees. Therefore, they did not get immediate mental health support.

### **Locals and outsiders**

Because Bailey is a small, rural community with an independent culture, there was some resentment regarding all the "outsiders in suits coming in to tell us what to do." Some of the first responders and local officials felt put down by the people from the "big city" who came to their "rescue." "People need to show respect for the locals," an officer said. Some officers were concerned that they never had the opportunity to debrief with law enforcement agencies from neighboring jurisdictions.

One example of interagency confusion occurred between Victim Services providers, and both expressed regret later about the lack of communication. Jefferson County Victim Services Unit was called to Platte Canyon High School by the Jefferson County SWAT team as part of its Incident Command System protocol. The Park County Victim Services staff did not know that Jeffco was on site and was surprised to see Jeffco staff at the hospital with the hostages. "Our community wanted to take care of its own," one victim advocate said. "We got tired of all the people from outside trying to help," one school staff member said. "It was too much."

A recommendation is for the local Victim Services agency to have oversight of Victim Services

advocates from other jurisdictions who wish to assist. To avoid confusion, responders should get direction from the local agency before providing services to victims.

### **Too much/too little immediate attention**

Interviewees expressed a dichotomy in feelings about the initial wave of mental health assistance. Many teachers said there was too much offered at first, and they were so overwhelmed that they didn't know how to take advantage of it. On the other hand, some of the first responders felt they didn't get enough initial attention. "Sending us home right after was a mistake. I was not ready to face my family," one officer said. Other groups, such as the School Board, also felt they could have used immediate attention after visiting the crime scene.

The elementary school teachers felt they were overlooked right after the incident. They went back to school the next day and felt unprepared to deal with students' emotions — and their own.

### **Accessing long-term services**

Across the board, people acknowledged that they knew services were available over the long-term. Park County Victim Services, Pikes Peak Mental Health and private providers offered ongoing services that were widely advertised throughout the community. However, several of those interviewed felt it wasn't OK to seek help after a certain length of time. "I felt that the services were there for the kids, but not so much for the teachers," a staff member said.

"There was a stoic attitude in the School District," a teacher said. "It seemed like we should suck it up and get over it." This same feeling of "get over it" was expressed by some law enforcement officers.

"We needed time to grieve," a teacher said. "Later, we should have been approached (by mental health providers) rather than waiting for us to ask them for help."

## Section VII. Lessons Learned

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### **Importance of relationships**

Ongoing relationships build trust. It is critical that schools and school districts develop strong partnerships with local law enforcement officers, victim advocates and community mental health agencies.

Strong interagency cooperation also can avoid duplication and streamline the process for obtaining grants and other sources of financial assistance.

In Colorado, the Division of Mental Health is developing the Colorado Crisis Education and Response Network, an umbrella structure involving community and school-based mental health providers, Red Cross, Salvation Army, law enforcement victim advocates and private mental health professional organizations. This network will provide resource management, training, communications and unified incident command in times of crisis.

### **Understanding the culture**

“You must be sensitive to the culture of community; respect what people need,” a school administrator said.

For mental health services to be effective, it is critical that responders understand the culture of the community. State agencies and those from other jurisdictions are most successful when they work in partnership with local people who have the trust and respect of the community. “People want to see local faces, or at least be introduced to helpers by the locals,” one provider said.

When dealing with victims, take into consideration language and cultural differences. It may be necessary to translate materials into several different languages. Recognize too that people from different cultures respond differently to mental health services.

### **Caring for the caregivers/responders**

There is a unique culture among law enforcement and other first responders who are accustomed to dealing with violence as part of their daily lives. For law enforcement officers, it is often difficult to admit they need to talk about a tragedy. However, when a major event occurs, it’s critical that all first responders — including dispatchers, office staff and advocates — have multiple opportunities to debrief emotionally and tactically. Both private and group counseling sessions should be available to meet different needs. Mental health services should also be provided for families of first responders.

Educators give much care and take responsibility for their students, often at the cost of not tending to their own mental health needs. Providing and encouraging use of ongoing mental health services will help staff heal.

### **Need for short- and long-term services**

People from throughout the community — parents, teachers, first responders — noted that everyone reacts differently and heals at a different rate. While it is essential to provide immediate mental health assistance, it is equally important to understand that long-term services will be needed.

Direct victims (e.g. hostages) need to have a specially designated area where they can meet with mental health professionals away from others less directly affected. The impact on young victims of crime of repeated law enforcement questioning must also be weighed.

Schools should expect and prepare for a range of reactions over a long period of time. Similar events in other schools, anniversaries and other benchmark dates can create strong emotions and traumatic

reactions. Teachers should be aware that students may have increased sensitivity to violent acts and language, and sexual content in literature. Parents are especially concerned when their children go off to college and leave the supportive community behind. A recommendation is to provide a support system for graduating students.

“The lesson is that providing services is time-consuming. You can’t put a time limit on it. It’s not traditional therapy,” a counselor said.

### **Information/Communication**

One way that people deal with a crisis is to seek abundant factual information, both about the incident and about how to handle the aftermath. “I needed to know what to expect,” a teacher said. For some families, it was important to understand the timeline of the day and exactly how the incident unfolded.

Some find it healing to read books, visit Web sites or attend lectures about trauma and its aftermath. Many teachers in Platte Canyon found the consultants from the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement to be an invaluable resource for information on trauma and post-traumatic stress. It was also helpful when teachers had material about dealing with trauma that was written at the appropriate developmental level for their students. (*See Appendix G.*)

### **The media**

It is critical that schools have a crisis communications plan, including designating an area for the press, and a person is assigned to be the contact with the media. The media have a need for accurate, timely information, and if there is no one to provide it, they will seek information on their own, sometimes getting spokespersons who may not have all the facts.

Even in the rural community of Bailey, where homes are “hidden” on mountaintops, the press managed to find homes of those involved and even tried to elude sheriff’s officers by hiking up mountainsides.

The media attention can be hard on high school students. While some may seek the media spotlight at first, they generally tire of the attention that is coming to their community and may become resentful and disrespectful toward the media.

Families are especially sensitive to the media’s “glorifying” the perpetrator instead of honoring the victims. For example, when the Virginia Tech incident occurred, a number of Platte Canyon families were invited to be on the Today Show. When they learned that the perpetrator’s manifesto was to be shown on the same show, about half decided not to appear, a family member reported.

It’s key to develop relationships with the media and to provide and encourage positive stories that foster community and individual healing.

### **Some other suggestions to consider:**

- ▶ Identify leaders in your community, including the school superintendent, Victim Services coordinator, local government officials, law enforcement officers and mental health agency representatives, who will work as a team to coordinate activities in the aftermath of the crisis. This group should meet regularly to deal with such issues as media response, mental health needs, grant requests, and special events.
- ▶ Have each local agency, including the schools and Victim Services, coordinate and oversee the work of its volunteers who have specific roles in the crisis response.
- ▶ Investigate how to access emergency funds that can be used for immediate, short-term needs before grant monies are made available.

- ▶ Identify a gathering place, such as a local church or community center, for students, families and staff. Create a list of potential businesses that can provide food, water and supplies at the site and offer mental health services there. Assign a community volunteer to serve as food coordinator.
- ▶ Establish a hotline staffed by trained volunteers. Consider two phone numbers: one for those needing help and another for those wanting to help.
- ▶ Create a list of qualified private mental health providers who can be of service to victims.

## Section VIII. Appendices

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### Appendix A: Interview Log

- A. Face-to-face individual and group interviews with:
  - 1. Platte Canyon school and district administrators
  - 2. Staff at elementary, middle and high schools
  - 3. School Board
  - 4. Parents
  - 5. Students
  - 6. Park County Sheriff's Department deputies, dispatchers and other staff
  - 7. Park County Victim Services staff members and volunteers
  - 8. Park County Department of Human Services
  - 9. Jefferson County Sheriff's Department Victim's Assistance
  - 10. Jefferson County Schools Department of Student Services
  - 11. Pikes Peak Mental Health
  
- B. Phone interviews with representatives of:
  - 1. Colorado State Patrol
  - 2. Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health
  - 3. Bailey-area clergy
  - 4. Colorado Organization of Victim Assistance
  - 5. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice
  - 6. Park County Board of Commissioners
  - 7. U.S. Department of Education
  - 8. National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement
  
- C. Online survey
  - 1. Parents of Platte Canyon students
  - 2. Platte Canyon School District staff
  - 3. Platte Canyon middle and high school students and alumni

## Appendix B: Questions for face-to-face and phone interviews

1. What contact, if any, did you have with victim services?
2. What kind of help did you receive (specific to the event)?
3. What worked?
4. What didn't work?
5. What was most helpful?
6. Who was most helpful?
7. What else would have been helpful?
8. Was help available when you needed it? When did you need it?
9. Do you think help is still available to you?
10. If you didn't receive help, why not:
  - a. Didn't know about
  - b. Didn't want it
  - c. Cost too much
  - d. Privacy concerns
  - e. Embarrassment
  - f. Other
11. Where/how did you get information about services?
12. What lesson did you learn that you would like others to know?

### Definitions

For the purpose of these interviews, the definition of victim services is crisis help from someone other than a family member or friend.

- ▶ **Who:** Anyone who helped you get to a safe place
- ▶ **What kind of help:** Physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, information, education
- ▶ **When:** Immediate, short-term, long-term and ongoing
- ▶ **Where:** School, church, mental health agency, other

## Appendix C: Online Surveys

*Note: Parents, staff and students had the opportunity to participate in the online surveys in spring 2008. The surveys were publicized through announcements, e-mails, letters and fliers. In the summaries below, similar comments have been combined, and some comments have been edited for clarity/brevity and to protect confidentiality.*

### 1. Student survey highlights:

Eighty-four students completed the survey. Of those responding almost 71 percent had no contact with victim services. Of those who did, 16 percent met with a counselor at school and 11 percent with a counselor or pastor at their place of worship.

Of those who received help, most received counseling, information about available resources and information about what reactions to expect. Of those who needed help, over 25 percent said they needed help within the first two weeks, with 7.6 percent needing help one year later.

Over 64 percent said nothing else would have been helpful. Of those who didn't receive help 85 percent didn't want it and about 10 percent were embarrassed. Only 8 percent didn't know about the help provided.

#### Responses:

##### What contact, if any, did you have with victim services?

Met with a counselor at school	16.0%
Met with Park County Victim Services	1.3%
Met with Pikes Peak Mental Health	1.3%
Met with a counselor at another mental health agency	1.3%
Met with a private counselor	5.3%
Met with a counselor/pastor at my place of worship	10.7%
No contact	70.7%

#### Other:

- My sisters
- Colorado Bureau of Investigation.
- Victim's advocate
- Group talking
- My personal therapist
- EMDR and a Reiki master
- My social worker

##### What kind of help did you receive?

Counseling	45.0%
Help with physical issues	2.5%
Financial assistance	2.5%
Spiritual guidance	20.0%
Information about what reactions to expect	35.0%
Information about available resources	47.5%
Academic help	5.0%
Help with family issues	12.5%

#### Other:

- None
- Just talked to my parents
- Relaxation and stress relief and just talking

### **What worked best for you in terms of victim services?**

- Being left alone with family; talking to parents.
- Friends.
- Having the community being there as a whole.
- Hearing about how other people got through it. An art teacher came in from Columbine High School and showed my art class work that her students made.
- None of it worked as well because all these people did was hassle the people who didn't want to talk about it and almost forced them to against their will.
- Being around someone else who knew what I was going through was helpful.
- Talking to my youth pastor.
- Talking about it and not trying to pretend like nothing happened.
- Just having someone listen.
- Pikes Peak Mental Health.
- I was glad they were there if we needed them. If we wanted their help we approached them... they didn't force themselves on us.
- The freedom to get help from whom you wish to get help from and the option to get help from any of the other sources because there were so many available.
- I also liked it best when the healer didn't have any expectations and just wanted me to say what I felt.
- Counselors.

### **What else would have been helpful?**

Additional counseling	8.2%
Information about dealing with a tragedy	15.1%
Help with physical problems	1.4%
Help for my family	12.3%
More information on what help was available	5.5%
Academic assistance	6.8%
Nothing	64.4%

### **What didn't help?**

- It seemed pointless because I was being told the same information over and over again.
- How it seemed after a month or two everyone wasn't as close as they had once been.
- Talking about it to someone that I hardly knew didn't really help. It made me feel weird.
- Talking about it all of the time didn't help and how we used Emily for everything bugged me.
- Religion.
- They weren't there for me and my family at all.
- Having people ask me about it.
- Everyone joked about it when it was happening.
- All the kids didn't get out.
- People thought they could deal with it themselves.
- I don't like the way people are still preaching about it, and turning her name into merchandise.
- The constant talk of "you have to see a counselor." I healed on my own.
- Putting in the cameras didn't really make me feel safer.
- Counselors.
- Parents.
- The media.
- People just trying to get you over it as fast as possible.
- People telling us the "steps to deal with a tragedy"
- Gifts.

### What and who was most helpful to you?

- My mom; parents; sister; family
- My friends
- On the anniversary we made care blankets for people in need. Being with friends and people who understood. The media not being too involved. Teachers talking to us about it. And the speech team helped very much.
- Youth minister
- Psychiatrist
- Sheriff
- Counselor
- Pikes Peak Mental Health
- Teachers
- Victim advocate
- My doctor
- Just being able to talk and comfort my friends during school was a help. It was hard to come back into school but with our friends there it was easier. My church was also a HUGE help, and being able to go there whenever I needed to was also really helpful.
- Having a place to go to hang out and talk (the church) helped me a lot after the shooting.

### What else would have been helpful?

- Giving us space.
- If they would have told us what was happening instead of saying everything was fine and there wasn't a problem, and holding info.
- More time to just talk and be with my friends during school hours directly following the incident, because it was too hard to just focus on schoolwork.

### When did you need help?

Immediately	12.7%
One week after the tragedy	13.9%
One to three months later	6.3%
Three to six months later	6.3%
One year later	7.6%
Ongoing	6.3%
I didn't need help	60.8%

### Comments:

- I found that after six months it seemed too late to actually talk to somebody and that's when I really needed to talk to somebody.
- I was in denial for a really long time after it happened. I thought if I didn't think about it, I wouldn't be hurt, but as soon as school was out for the summer I got really depressed and everyone else was already over the worst of their grief, so I felt like no one understood me.
- It came as a shock and I didn't really believe what was happening at first, but it all just sort of hit me and was overwhelming and too much for me. I didn't know what to do.
- I like to keep to myself about the whole situation because she was a good friend to me and no matter what I do she's not coming back.
- If we need help we'll ask. All the counselors were pushy and thought we needed stuff.
- Friends, friends, friends.
- After about four months, I was feeling OK, but when the one-year anniversary came around, it felt like the tragedy had happened just yesterday.
- I personally have moments when for no reason at all, I can't get it out of my mind and that is when I need people and help so badly it hurts.
- I like to help other people and I am fine dealing with it on my own.

### **If you didn't receive help, why not?**

Didn't know about it	8.2%
Didn't want it	85.2%
Cost too much	1.6%
Privacy concerns	6.6%
Embarrassment	9.8%

### **Comments:**

- I felt like I didn't deserve it. I didn't know Emily very well. Other people who went through it more directly needed the attention. I know now that I should have.
- Felt as if it was not necessary.
- Didn't want to.
- I wasn't afflicted by this at all.
- Did not need it.
- I really just needed to deal with it between people I know, not throw it out to everyone.
- I didn't want help at first because I believed it wasn't a big issue but eventually my mother forced me. In the end it was a lot better than before.
- I felt being around my friends and classmates helped more. They understood what we all were going through more than anyone else in the world.

### **How did you receive information about services?**

School staff	80.0%
Fliers from school	23.1%
Newspaper	13.8%
Internet	10.8%
Church	23.1%
Park County Victim Services	20.0%
Pikes Peak Mental Health	9.2%

### **Other:**

- Didn't
- Teacher
- Let's just say everyone was saying I needed counseling.
- Already had it
- My doctor
- I was requested to seek help by a coach.
- Friends
- Social worker

### **Do you feel safe at school?**

Yes	85.4%
No	9.8%
Not Applicable	4.9%

### **Comments:**

- Even though there was the tragedy, I never felt less safe at my school afterwards.
- Mostly nothing has changed securitywise. But I've always felt safe at school. What happened wasn't the school's fault. No matter what security measures are put in place, if people want to commit a crime they will.
- This place is a building of constant over watch. We are monitored every hour of every day in the attempt to make use feel safer, only to make us feel confined and cornered while being caged like criminals.
- The security now at our school is strict but slowly loosening its grip.

- School has locked down completely and there is no true way that anything like that could happen again.
- We have stopped non-students from intruding but not current students who are ticked off and want to go on some sort of rampage.
- We have too much security now, and it's somewhat like a prison.
- School feels pretty safe with all the security there is now.
- We've upgraded just enough to feel like we're safe, yet not in a prison.
- I have always felt safe at my school and today I think that it is still the same.
- The entire community feels guilty about being on watch when the event occurred. I must say, however, that our school is extremely safe already. So many people are trying to change our school and how it's run to make it "safer." I think that they should know the community is mostly doing it for themselves. At least at this school, the students don't want change. We've already gone through enough. We are extremely safe. The little that could be changed for the better would cost way more than the School District could handle.
- With all the new security, it's hard not to feel safe, but there are times when I feel scared, of course.
- So much has changed but so much for the better!
- I like having parents at our doors welcoming people rather than metal detectors and police keeping people out. I like an open environment; kids need to explore.
- Now I know that if there is a strange person in the school, they should have a visitor's tag on and if they don't, they will be reported.
- I don't feel totally safe anywhere.

#### **What one key lesson would you want other students to know?**

- That it is completely OK to need help, that everybody else was feeling the exact same feelings or varying degrees. Don't close up and not let anybody in. Your community, family and friends will be there for you.
- It's OK to cry.
- Let out any inner turmoil with others.
- To spend time with other students who are going through the same thing.
- Pay attention to your environment and what is going on around you. It would be beneficial not only for your own safety, but for the safety of your peers.
- I would want kids to know how to get over such a tragedy.
- You aren't alone in something like this.
- Do what the teachers/cops tell you. Keep calm during emergencies.
- Life is short and you never know when it might end so make the most of it.
- Love everybody...don't be a hater; be a love maker.
- When something bad happens not all of us need help from someone we don't know, but be patient with them because they're just trying to help.
- Don't blame yourself.
- Anything is possible and the professionals know how to handle it.
- Ask for help.
- Don't let something like this keep you down.
- Turn to each other. They will understand you better than anyone. Don't internalize your feelings.
- This isn't a public thing, it really happened to us and it's happened to others but everyone doesn't need to know every little detail.
- It will take time, for some a long time, for others a very short time, to get over it. Also, if you have something that helps you don't think that a year-plus later if you are still doing that thing that it is silly and to stop if it helps it helps. I cannot sleep without the TV on anymore. That started the night of the shooting. I needed the voices in the back to calm me down. I still do it. I was ashamed, but not any more.
- Have faith.

**I am:**

Freshman	7.3%
Sophomore	46.3%
Junior	15.9%
Senior	29.3%
2007 Graduate	1.2%

**2. Staff Survey Highlights**

Forty-one staff members from the Platte Canyon School District responded to the online staff survey, with 46 percent being staff at the high school. More than half of respondents took advantage of some type of mental health services. While 35 percent said they needed help immediately, 22.5 percent said that ongoing help is needed.

**What contact, if any, did you have with victim services?**

Met with Park County Victim Services	21.1%
Met with Pikes Peak Mental Health	23.7%
Met with a counselor through Workers' Compensation	15.8%
Met with a counselor at another mental health agency	5.3%
Met with a private counselor	23.7%
Met with a counselor/pastor at my place of worship	5.3%
No contact	42.1%

**Comments:**

- I don't know. Some people came to the church and led small groups, but I don't know who they were.
- Group counseling with other parents whose children were directly involved in the attack.
- Met with counselor at school.
- EMDR therapist very helpful!
- Pikes Peak Mental Health was at school the first week back.
- Pikes Peak for initial debriefing. Met with Mental Health three months after incident, thus validating trauma.
- I had contact with many of the above people, but it was just at schoolwide meetings, never individually.
- Met with medical doctor.
- Was not employed by district when incident occurred.

**What kind of help did you receive?**

Counseling	54.8%
Help with physical issues	9.7%
Financial assistance	6.5%
Spiritual guidance	3.2%
Information about what reactions to expect	71.0%
Information about available resources	48.4%
Help on how to work with students	48.4%
Help with family issues	25.8%

**Comments:**

- We were just encouraged to talk in small groups.
- Used private insurance to deal with the physical side effects of trauma.

**What worked best?**

- Appreciated counselor placed in school the day back after the shooting. He helped me

understand what to expect from my student on a very specific basis. Also was able to work with counselor provided by employer's program.

- Explanations by professionals on how students might react and when they would feel stress.
- Having so many mental health professionals on site and available to talk with informally was helpful since I didn't really feel like I needed to set an appointment and follow up formally.
- Having time with my co-workers to talk about our feelings.
- Knowing that it was available if needed.
- Planning for my staff and students.
- I was helped best by information on what reactions to expect in the future and also by receiving the knowledge that my reactions were normal.
- The services provided for the entire staff in the days directly following the incident worked the best for me. The presence of many available services was comforting. The group sessions where we vented as a staff were helpful. Services provided to the students involved were remarkable. I recently had a college-bound student change her major to psychology because she was so positively impacted by the services she received. Constant communication! Them calling me to participate with my kiddo. I was overwhelmed and very in the moment and didn't consider much about groups initially.
- Having someone there to cover my class after the crisis. I did not realize how hard it would be to jump back into the classroom.
- The church being open all day and night to be able to gather with my peer groups. They gave us all our meals because I couldn't even think about cooking. Having people around me made the biggest difference.
- I didn't want services. I'm a private person who dealt with the situation my own way.
- Knowing who to call and Victim Services' help.
- Being able to get on antidepressants; having someone help me deal with feelings of helplessness stirred up from past trauma.
- Having additional financial assistance to cover counseling expenses not covered by Workers' Compensation or insurance.
- Knowledge that help was available. (However, deciding who to see and how to enact those services was hard to decipher.)

### **What didn't work well?**

- Fighting with providers and insurance to get proper treatment. Having to jump through so many hoops and so much out-of-pocket cost.
- Long-term efforts to support staff though offered mental health services and group formats were not attended well. It seemed like everyone at the elementary school wanted to just move past it and not keep talking about it.
- Not enough time, as adults, to heal.
- At the time of the shooting I needed time with my family, which was not allowed because I teach at the elementary school and we were supposed to continue business as usual. As time went on the constant reminders had a negative impact. Sometimes it is OK to forget the bad and move on. At times, such as the anniversary date, it feels as if we are being forced to continue mourning.
- I lost all faith in counselors when I felt betrayed by the counselor at our high school.
- The personal counselor. I believe we were not a good fit.
- I had a lot of support. Conversations with fellow elementary teachers were upsetting considering they were drawing many unfounded conclusions regarding safety and what happened to whom. The media was relentless for about a week at home.
- I didn't feel as if anyone could give me an idea as to what to do in my classroom the day the students returned. I really wanted advice as to how I could best address the needs of the students, as well as how I could personally deal with the day at a high school level.
- I'm sure that different people used different things. It is all individualized.
- Communication is the area I feel didn't work.
- Having so many outside counselors the days after the shooting.
- It was taxing to have to drive down to Denver so often.

- Too many “looky-loo helpers” right after the incident, instead of “real” help. Many were still numb and unaware how the incident affected us. It was good to have counselors upstairs to send students to; however, having counselors in each classroom was too much. One such “counselor” stayed about a week and was very wearing upon those who were “hosting” her.

### **What and who was most helpful to you?**

- Knowing what to expect from my student was key. This prepared me with a plan to handle the manifestation immediately when it took place. My student had a flashback of the SWAT team swarming into the room several months later and actually passed out. I was prepared to help him take care of the fear of the actual experience.
- Staff supporting one another.
- Family, friends. School District was very thoughtful with allowing teachers to return to work when they were comfortable and to provide subs for teachers who needed a break during the day.
- The speaker from the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement who came to talk to our staff.
- My co-workers and administration in the School District.
- Counselor.
- Acknowledging that I needed help was the best thing I could have done. However, it took six months after the incident to realize that I needed help.
- My mom.
- I actually found the guidance provided by the principal/staff of Columbine High School to be the most helpful.
- Park County Victim Services and the other service providers. Being called daily to be included helped. We were all spinning.
- Our counselors. I could talk to them about my concerns, issues, difficulties, etc. as they were faces I recognized. While it was nice having all of the extra help at the school, I did not feel comfortable talking to someone who was not at the school the day of the shooting.
- Basic information that let us know our reactions were normal was the most helpful.
- The EMDR therapists were the best because that helped me deal with a lot of issues that this incident brought up.
- Jeffco Schools counseling staff’s continued support and guidance.
- Personal Counseling (Private).
- The most help I received is a private psychiatrist that I was referred to through Workers’ Compensation. Also, having medications paid for.
- My students. After everything happened I called each one because I needed to know that they were OK. Once they were back at school and functioning, I was able to move on as well.
- Counselors from Jeffco and Pikes Peak.

### **What else would have been helpful?**

Additional counseling	20.0%
Financial assistance	5.7%
Information about what to expect	11.4%
Information on helping my students	25.7%
Help with physical problems	2.9%
Help for my family	0.0%
More information on what help was available	20.0%
Nothing	42.9%

### **Comments:**

- It would have been helpful to know what to expect from peers as they began to have to cope.
- I just had no idea what kind of help I needed.
- I should have sought a professional opinion or a counselor that would fit my personality.
- I felt supported.

- Insurance and Workers' Compensation information and rights of harmed workers.
- As a teacher after the fact, knowing students who were still having problems dealing with the occurrence.

### When did you need help?

Immediately	35.0%
One week after the tragedy	22.5%
One to three months later	20.0%
Three to six months later	20.0%
One year later	7.5%
Ongoing	22.5%
I didn't need help	37.5%

### Comments:

- Anxiety lasted for about six months.
- I was an absolute wreck from the day it happened until a month later. The first two days were the worst. I was still really shaky for the whole first year.
- Christmas was tough.
- After the kids came back to school, I almost needed a day to unwind. I feel that a half-day schedule would have been best for the first few days back.
- If I did choose to use services, it would have been right away.
- I had my friends who did healing energy work and I also do that so it helped me get through this hard time. I also did the EMDR Therapy. I am really grateful for all of this great work.
- I never used services formally. It was nice to talk to people from Columbine and other staff members and family and friends. The others felt like "outsiders" so it was uncomfortable to confide in them.
- Although my counseling services were terminated, it would still be helpful to feel like we had a time and place to talk about the lingering effects this has had on us. I feel like we can't really do this anymore. It is over a year and we all have to pretend we're over it or keep stuff to ourselves.
- I was numb for two weeks — led by the hand by both co-workers/family. When rage took over, I sought help through Workers' Comp. Counseling is still ongoing. Had trouble with getting information about Workers' Comp and wasn't satisfied with the services.

### If you didn't receive help, why not?

Didn't know about it	0.0%
Didn't need it	94.7%
Cost too much	0.0%
Privacy concerns	5.3%
Embarrassment	5.3%

### Comments:

- Would have been easier to seek if people already known, like principals, counselors in the school had led discussions.
- Lack of time.
- I just didn't know what I needed or how to ask for help.
- I almost didn't because I didn't realize the harm that had been inflicted upon me
- Too much of an effort, easier just not to.

### How did you receive information about services?

School administration	85.3%
Park County Victim Services	41.2%
Pikes Peak Mental Health	38.2%
Newspaper	8.8%
Church	11.8%
Internet	2.9%

**Other:**

- Workers' Compensation.
- The school was really good about letting us know help was available and free. I just didn't know what to do.
- Recommendation by a staff member.
- Being called directly was VERY important for me (and my family).
- Through friends and counselors in the school.
- Groupwise.
- Chose Workers' Compensation due to legal issues.
- School staff member.

**What one key lesson would you want other school staff to know?**

- Some of the people who you thought could help were "required" not to talk to victims because of fear of repercussion.
- You can be human in front of the kids. Those teachers who did not attempt to be Superman or Wonder Woman positioned themselves to teach some real life lessons, in addition to the course.
- Try to get back to a normal routine as soon as possible.
- It helped our staff recover to know that when the code was called everyone was well trained and reacted correctly to contain the shooter. Staff support to each other was probably the most helpful, along with suspending regular deadlines and academic expectations for the first few weeks.
- Everyone handles these kinds of tragedies differently so it's important to be accepting of people's reactions.
- Take time to heal and find the support that you need to do that.
- It doesn't go away immediately. It takes time and everyone handles stress differently.
- Get to know all entities before you have an emergency.
- I teach in a building east of where the incident took place. The initial reaction to some was that those of us who were in our building didn't feel the impact felt in the west campus. That's not true. The students were evacuated to our building and we definitely felt the impact. The counselor I worked with assured me that this is normal. We were all a part of the original crisis.
- Well, I would like to have had more support from my family. It would have been nice if my husband had had someone contact him to talk about how to be supportive of me.
- Time does heal and that trying to better your life and that of others *because of* what happened (a lesson Emily's parents taught us) is a tremendous way to truly heal.
- Gossip and assumptions are hurtful, small minded and do not foster productive solutions to problems, rather knee-jerk responses. Ask, think and positively deal with problems/ ideas. More info between the schools might help.
- Have an emergency plan in place that is reviewed by staff and practiced. I think the only reason that our school was so successful in securing our site was based on the emergency plan that we had, and knew. Also, substitute teachers should be trained.
- Do not overreact to tragedies that may occur in your backyard, e.g., adding cameras and fences.
- Look for all sources because everyone is different.
- You have to have good communication and know where everyone is.
- Work as team in best interest of the students!
- Have a plan of action and practice it.
- Getting counseling was really important and not a sign that you are weak or looney.
- That the process of recovering from an event of this type will be ongoing. You may not need help right away, but may three months, six months or a year later. Also, that the whole family is affected.
- Informed Communication: Need: (1) Day of tragedy, complete list of school populace to ascertain those who are still unaccounted for, (2) Coordination between police agencies present (3) Prior training for school employees for emergency readiness (4) Privacy for victims (5) Informed District employees proficient in disseminating Workers' Comp information and advocating for victims.

- That not needing help is normal too. Everyone was so focused on telling everyone when and where help was available that at times I felt strange because I did not feel the need for professional support.

**My role in Platte Canyon School District is:**

Elementary staff	25.7%
Middle school staff	20.0%
High school staff	45.7%
Central staff	8.6%

Participants responded that their roles also included:

- Parent and School Board member
- Administrator
- I am also a graduate of PCHS. It affected me in that way too.
- Early Childhood staff and a parent
- Transportation Department

**3. Parent Survey Highlights**

Forty-two parents of Platte Canyon students responded to the online survey, with the vast majority being parents of secondary students. Over half of the respondents had no contact with victim services. Of those whose families received support, the largest percentage, 70, received information about what reactions to expect. Information about available resources and counseling was also received by more than half of those who received help. While about 45 percent said nothing else would have been helpful, a significant percentage noted additional counseling and more information about what services were available would have been useful. Most said that help was needed immediately, but 18 percent said ongoing help was needed. Over 64 percent said they didn't want help and 63 percent received information from school fliers.

**What contact, if any, did your family have with victim services?**

Met with a counselor at school	21.1%
Met with Park County Victim Services	13.2%
Met with Pikes Peak Mental Health	7.9%
Met with a counselor at another mental health agency	7.9%
Met with a private counselor	23.7%
Met with a counselor/pastor at my place of worship	13.2%
No contact	55.3%

**What kind of help did your family receive?**

Counseling	51.9%
Help with physical issues	7.4%
Financial assistance	22.2%
Spiritual guidance	18.5%
Information about what reactions to expect	70.4%
Information about available resources	63.0%
Academic help	3.7%
Help with family issues	14.8%

**What worked best for you?**

- The ease of filing for financial assistance.
- Keeping us together.
- Counselor and teachers checking in with my kids.
- Group gathering to discuss the interactions and what was done at the scene.
- Discussions of other participants' feelings and why they had them.

- My 6-year-old met with the school counselor about three months after the incident to deal with fears. It was very helpful.
- They were there with us and our daughter from the first moment it occurred and were there for us day and night, giving us their pager numbers and we were able to call at *any* time.
- Just helpful to speak with someone.
- Counseling through work place (CSEAP). I was then able to use information to counsel my children.
- Being aware that they were available. The work done in the school setting was very helpful.
- The information we received was very helpful, as was the counseling.
- Information about what was there if and when needed
- Talking with spiritual leaders about how I was feeling. I felt very unsafe, scared for me and my family.
- The comfort knowing that Victim Services would help pay for counseling for my family.
- The “always open” availability of Victim Services. Whenever we needed them, they were there.
- All of the meetings with other involved families and students with counselors so frequently during the first two or three weeks. Options, support, checking in — even later — such as at Christmas which was very hard on our family.
- Talking with others who were there with me.
- Meeting with a Christian counselor with our same belief system and talking to Christian friends.

### **What didn't work?**

- That there was an overload of assistance initially, and it diminished later when we needed it more. I had trouble getting referrals for private counseling.
- Information on what help was available sooner.
- My kids felt like they were “badgered” by people. They said they were “OK” and people just kept asking them questions over and over. They started to get angry and frustrated about that.
- It all worked. It is a continuing process that needs to be maintained. The issues and feeling you have just don't stop . . . but the interactions with others who were there do.
- I think that there wasn't enough counseling support for the elementary kids. They were affected greatly and many had fears for months afterwards.
- How much information *had* to be shared with the media. The police department protected us as best as they could and even offered to be at the house for the media coverage, but we were not happy with the amount of information the media was given access to.
- It would have been nice if we as a community could have met with counselors together, not long after the tragedy occurred. This would have really helped.
- It was difficult not having solid information about whether or not my child was safe during the actual hostage situation.
- Support from the school and local places in dealing with healing and how to help your kids.
- The unbelievable amount of paperwork and how long it took for reimbursement.
- The counselor referrals were not that helpful. None was able to connect with my kid.
- Focusing on the tragedy for too long.

### **Who and what was most helpful to you?**

- Community support.
- Family and friends support. The community gathering one year later.
- Our community and Ellen Keyes.
- Teachers just being there and providing a “normal” routine. Information about reactions was helpful.
- Knowing that the other people there have the same feelings and that you are not alone.
- The school counselor.
- Our daughter was one of the victims, and Victim Services was very helpful.
- Friends and counselor supplied through work. Just talking and letting me know some things to expect from my kids.
- The staff and teachers at Platte Canyon.

- Pikes Peak Mental Health.
- The spiritual counselor at my church.
- The personal counselors that I took my family to for counseling.
- My fellow firefighters.

**What else would have been helpful?**

Additional counseling	34.5%
Information about dealing with a tragedy	20.7%
Help with physical problems	3.4%
Help for my family	10.3%
More information on what help was available	27.6%
Academic assistance	10.3%
Nothing	44.8%

**Other:**

- What to watch for in the grieving process of teens.
- A community counseling meeting would have helped me get counseling earlier. I initially withdrew from life until friends helped.
- Really it was the out-of-pocket money that was the biggest concern, and all the paperwork.
- Specialized counseling in the areas of teen/female trauma.
- I felt like my needs were met.

**When did you need help?**

Immediately	39.5%
One week after the tragedy	26.3%
One to three months later	26.3%
Three to six months later	18.4%
One year later	13.2%
Ongoing	18.4%
I didn't need help	39.5%

**Comments:**

- Don't think I *needed* help. I *wanted* help.
- In a tragedy such as this the community needs immediate help and answers.
- Although we didn't need counseling, the immediate response of the community and local churches in organizing candle vigils, prayer services, community gatherings at the Farmers Union were most helpful immediately.
- It's amazing how it is an ongoing tragedy but I feel that the School District handled this exceptionally well.
- I think it is important to have resources there if needed for the kids and family.
- The two psychologists from National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement who came to speak were very helpful.

**If you didn't receive help, why not?**

Didn't know about it	28.6%
Didn't want it	64.3%
Cost too much	0.0%
Privacy concerns	7.1%
Embarrassment	0.0%

**Other:**

- My son didn't want to participate/felt other kids needed it more.
- Didn't need it.
- My kids were not attending school at that time.

- Too much help. Overkill on services.
- Talking with other parents helped.
- Did attend functions for help.
- Child was in middle school, but was absent that day.

### **How did you receive information about services?**

School staff	57.1%
Fliers from school	62.9%
Newspaper	28.6%
Internet	11.4%
Church	17.1%
Park County Victim Services	34.3%
Pikes Peak Mental Health	14.3%

### **Other:**

- Letters from the School District.
- Platte Canyon Fire District.
- Work place (CSEAP).
- Pine Cam Postings on the Internet.
- Gossip.
- The phone numbers were advertised well. It was the process and paper work that was frustrating.
- We were mostly rounded up by Victim Services. None of us was really able to do much especially for the first two weeks.

### **What's one key lesson you would like other parents to know?**

- You can take so many precautions to ensure the safety of your children, but there is much which is out of our control . . . and always will be. Gates, home schooling, praying, etc. do not prevent some things from happening.
- Remember random acts of kindness in memory of Emily. Follow the Keyes family example of kindness/love and not hate.
- Stay together and don't dwell on blame.
- Kids react very differently to this type of situation. What is normal for one student can be very abnormal for another. I think periodic check-ins are very helpful.
- There is help for you. You have to want it. You don't have to suffer alone, but you will if you don't come forward.
- Remember that fears can appear months after the event and that it may be difficult to attach those fears to the event. Watch for emotional distress for a long time afterward.
- Let the Victim Services staff help you as much as possible. No question or request is too much. They will do whatever they can to make this as smooth as possible.
- That there are resources available where they can get help.
- That the impact for the most part was the same for all of us. Not just those with children. We all shared the same or similar fears. Even people across the country. We need to find comfort together. So everyone can get help.
- Kids need to feel a connection to the community on many levels, school, church and their activities. It is that connection that helps them through tragedies.
- Teach your children to be wary of and report strangers and strange behaviors in their environment.
- The way that Platte Canyon handled this situation should be an example to the rest of the country on how a high school staff and community come together and support their students. We, as a family, including parents who are first responders, are blessed to live here.
- Everyone handles crisis in a different manner. Don't fall into the trap of what the specialists anticipate. Or that you *need* help.
- You cannot live in fear.

- Love your children, keep them safe!
- That having a plan that is practiced is important. Not to just forget what has happened and how real it is.
- Even if you don't think you need it, talk to someone about the incident. I thought my kids were OK, but found out through talking with others that some things they were saying indicated they were struggling with what happened and I got them some counseling so they could talk about it.
- Each child can react differently to trauma. It may not show up until six months to two to four years after the event.
- The first thing we did was get the kids together to let them deal with it amongst peers.
- Get into counseling fast and stick with it for several months. Take time off from work.
- Just to listen, be patient and understanding with your kids. Let them go through all the emotions and whatever it takes to heal them, let them go through it. Don't let them shut you out. Talk!!!
- Regarding the terrorist attack — You are safe, strong and able to keep your kids safe by helping them be aware. Healing comes by reaching out to others. Go talk to others in the same boat.
- This is still a safe place to work and live and go to school.
- Hug and kiss your babies.

**I am:**

Parent of elementary student	17.5%
Parent of secondary student	82.5%
Community member	0.0%

## Appendix D: Grants Received

### **School District, Pikes Peak Mental Health and Park County Crisis Center:**

#### **School Emergency Response for Victims (SERV): \$184,185**

*(Emergency grant of \$49,871; supplemental grant of \$134,314)*

- Counselor
- Communication support
- Substitute teachers
- Tutors
- Additional administrative support
- Afterschool activities
- Drop-in Center
- Security/law enforcement at the school

### **U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program: \$274,187**

*(Emergency Assistance Program, \$97,921; supplemental funding of \$176,266)*

- Mental Health Counselor
- Outreach/Education Coordinator
- School Administration Coordinator
- CARE Support Groups
- Mileage
- Supplies

### **VALE, Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement: \$22,866**

*(Emergency grants of \$19,230 were made in October 2006 to assist in obtaining necessary services to the victims. \$3,636 was provided to continue support for part-time nurse)*

- Additional nursing services
- Support group for students
- Travel expenses incurred by victim assistance staff
- Printing costs
- Additional staff hours to respond to needs of victims

### **Park County Crisis Center:**

#### **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA): \$19,404**

- Additional staff hours, including coordination of volunteers to cover the hotlines
- Computers

#### **Victims:**

#### **Local Victim Compensation Funds: \$60,000**

- Counseling and other medical expenses

#### **State VALE Emergency Fund through Colorado Organization of Victim Assistance: \$1,536**

- Non-victim compensation eligible expenses

### **Sheriff's Department:**

#### **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA): \$33,466**

- Extra hours for the victim advocates
- Parent support group
- Training

### **Edwin Byrne Drug Control & System Improvement Funds, provided by Division of Criminal Justice: \$29,111**

- Overtime costs for extra security at the two school districts in Park County.

## Appendix E: Contacts for Further Information

Mary Pat Bowen  
Park County Sheriff's Office  
Victim Services Program  
Phone: 303-816-5912  
mpbowen@parkco.us

Nancy Feldman  
Manager, Office for Victims Programs  
Colorado Division of Criminal Justice  
Phone: 303-239-4437  
nancy.feldman@cdps.state.co.us  
<http://dcj.state.co.us/ovp/>

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Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance  
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<http://www.coloradocrimevictims.org>

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Jim Walpole  
Superintendent  
Platte Canyon School District  
Phone: 303-838-7666  
jwalpole@plattecanyonsd1.org

Pikes Peak Mental Health  
Judy Arpin: [juditha@ppbhg.org](mailto:juditha@ppbhg.org) 303-838-5013  
Michael Rovaris: [michaelr@ppbhg.org](mailto:michaelr@ppbhg.org); 719-314-4252  
Gerald Albrent: [geralda@ppbhg.org](mailto:geralda@ppbhg.org); 719-314-4246  
Maria Berger: [mariab@ppbhg.org](mailto:mariab@ppbhg.org); 719-572-6279  
Jason DeaBueno: [jasond@ppbhg.org](mailto:jasond@ppbhg.org); 719-572-6227

## **Appendix F: Web Resources**

The following Web sites are helpful sources of materials on dealing with tragedy and trauma:

Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance

<http://www.coloradocrimevictims.org/crisistips.html>

National Organization for Victim Assistance

<http://www.trynova.org/>

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

<http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsnet.org/>

National Association of School Psychologists

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis\\_safety/index.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/index.aspx)

National Education Association Health Information Network, School Crisis Guide

<http://www.neahin.org/>

American Counseling Association

<http://www.counseling.org/>

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp>

I Love U Guys Foundation

<http://iloveguys.org>

### VICTIM AND WITNESS REACTIONS TO TRAUMA



When an individual witnesses or is victimized by violence, they experience the symptoms of trauma. Over time, as people work through their feelings, they learn to move through the trauma and are once again able to focus on their lives and interests. If a victim or witness needs more than you are able to provide, seek professional assistance. (Many counselors can assist in working through feelings.

The following are expected reactions to trauma. Individuals may experience different reactions at different times. Remember: most of these reactions will diminish over time and are completely NORMAL.

- Shock, disbelief, numbness
- Anxiety, panicky feelings, hyper vigilance, exaggerated startle response
- Having intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, or unwanted memories of the event
- Loss of sense of security and safety
- Feeling detached from others
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Clinging to family and friends
- Anger, irritability, being argumentative
- Blaming themselves for the tragedy ("If only I . . .")
- Nightmares, difficulty falling or staying asleep, sleeping more than usual
- Changes in appetite
- Feeling like emotions are out of control ("I'll never stop crying")
- Regression: behaviors exhibited at an earlier age, i.e. sleeping with lights on
- Difficulty concentrating
- Deep sadness or depression
- Physical complaints such as headache, stomachache, muscle tension, nausea

2460 West 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 255-C  
Denver, Colorado 80211  
phone: 303 861 1160  
toll free: 800 261 2682  
fax: 303 861 1265  
[www.ColoradoCrimeVictims.org](http://www.ColoradoCrimeVictims.org)

## HELPING CHILDREN AND TEENS COPE WITH TRAUMA



1. Be direct, simple, honest and appropriate. Explain truthfully what happened.
2. Listen to what the child or teen is feeling or asking you. Then respond according to the child or teen's needs and your own ability.
3. Encourage the child or teen to express feelings openly. Crying is normal and helpful. So are feelings of anger.
4. Accept the emotions and reactions the child or teen expresses. Don't tell the child or teen how she or he should or should not feel.
5. Share your feelings with the child or teen. Allow the child or teen to comfort you.
6. Offer warmth and your physical presence and affections.
7. Be patient. Know that children or teens need to hear and/or tell "the story" and to ask the same questions again and again.
8. Reassure the child or teen that the loss is not contagious; that the death of one person does not mean that another loved one will also die or be injured.
9. Maintain order, stability and security in the child or teen's life.
10. Take your own advice. Take care of yourself. If you're not okay, the child or teen cannot be okay.
11. Many counselors can assist in working through feelings.

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## TIPS FOR STUDENTS



You have been through something very unexpected, violent and scary. Lots of other students are feeling what you are feeling. Everything you are feeling right now is NORMAL! Over time, your feelings will calm down and you will feel better. Here is some information that will help:

1. Don't be afraid of your feelings. If you feel like crying, go ahead. Crying will help you to feel better, because it lets go of stress.
2. Everyone has different feelings at different times. Accept your own feelings and those of others.
3. If you feel sad or angry a lot, or if you feel numb, talk about it with a friend, a teacher, a parent or a counselor.
4. If you are afraid, nervous or spaced out, don't worry---that's normal.
5. You might have nightmares or think about bad things a lot. Try to talk it out with someone. Other ways you can work out your feelings are to write, draw, play music, hike, run, or bike.
6. The grown ups around you have a lot of feelings about what happened, too. Be patient. They are doing the best they can.
7. If you're jumpy or bad-tempered, know that this will go away.
8. Don't pressure yourself or others to "get it together". Everyone heals in their own way. It takes time.
9. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you feel like you need help with your feelings, ask your parent or teacher to arrange for a counselor to help.
10. When you feel you are ready, try to go back to some of the activities you enjoyed before.

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## TIPS FOR TEACHERS, STAFF, AND MENTORS



1. Be sure that YOU are calm and ready to talk before expecting students to do so. Take deep breaths. Use your support system. If you are in crisis, you cannot be effective.
2. Learn the symptoms of trauma and let students know that what they are feeling and experiencing is NORMAL and will be less frequent and painful over time. Let them know that everyone reacts differently, on their own schedule, and all feelings are acceptable. Let them know that asking for help or seeing a counselor is okay.
3. Encourage discussion of events. This allows students to express some of the emotions. Discussion also dispels rumors and misinformation.
4. Encourage support systems. Groups become vital to re-establish a sense of safety and belonging.
5. Do not expect students to "tough it out" or "move on". Grieving and trauma recovery are processes that can't be rushed.
6. Remember that one of the hallmarks of trauma is difficulty concentrating and processing information. Do not expect students to perform well in the weeks immediately following the traumatic event.
7. Encourage alternative ways of expressing feelings. Suggest journals, drawing, painting, music, dance, etc. Many students cannot express themselves verbally.
8. If a student exhibits symptoms that are overwhelming or disruptive, suggest outside counseling by referring the parent(s) to victim compensation.

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## TIPS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS



1. Encourage discussion of the traumatic event. Be sure that YOU are calm and ready to talk before expecting children or teens to do so. Take deep breaths. Talk with your support system. If you are in crisis, you cannot be effective.
2. Learn the symptoms of trauma and let your child or teen know that what they are experiencing is normal and expected. Tell and show them that they are loved and valued. Be patient.
3. Sleep disturbances are one of the most common symptoms. Nightmares, difficulty falling or staying asleep and fitful sleep are normal reactions.
4. A child or teen may experience regression. If they revert to behaviors from an earlier age, allow it. This will pass over time. Examples are: sleeping with the light on, wanting to be held, sucking their thumb, and wetting the bed.
5. Talk to your child or teen and LISTEN to what they say. Accept and support their feelings, no matter what they are. Do not try to talk them out of how they are feeling. Let them know that all of their feelings are normal.
6. Encourage time with their friends and support systems.
7. Loss of concentration and achievement is a symptom of trauma. Do not expect your child or teen to perform at their usual level for a while.
8. Many counselors can assist you in this difficult time.

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## Talking Points for Classroom Teachers First Day Back at School

1. Welcome/Introduce visitors in classrooms
  - Good to see you all together.
  - Introduce visitors — explain the counseling support for the school.
2. Highlight what a great job the students did in the emergency response.
  - You did the right things.
  - Normal reaction to second guess what you did and what you saw others do.
  - You did the best you could — and you did well.
3. Acknowledge great community and school response.
4. Validate safety and security for today.
  - Two main entry points.
  - Describe the additional security/law enforcement that is provided.
  - Long-term safety and security planning is being done by experts.
5. Affirm that each individual has a different and valid perception of the experience.
  - Respect each person's feelings — no right or wrong.
  - Respect privacy and confidentiality.
6. Questions
  - What do you need today to feel OK about being here?
  - If you or someone you care about is feeling bad, who will you talk to or where will you go?
  - What do you plan to do this weekend to take care of yourself?
7. Closing points
  - OK to ask for what you need.
  - Take care of yourself: Water, eat, sleep.
  - Take care of each other.
  - Be with each other.
  - OK to have some time alone — in smaller amounts.
  - Talk to your parents or trusted adults in your life.
8. Continue to support each other.

**Platte Canyon School District  
Update  
Sunday, October 1, 2006**

Statement from Superintendent Jim Walpole: "Our students and staff continue to grieve and to heal. I thank all of you in our Bailey community and the broader community across the country for your support. I ask that you take time for a special prayer for our students, parents and staff at your church services today and tomorrow's Yom Kippur day of prayers. I also ask you to pray for our community officers and emergency response personnel who are experiencing the pain of this tragic event.

"This Sunday we are focusing on establishing longer-term counseling support for students and staff who need these services, on collecting personal belongings to be returned to students this coming week, and on preparing the schools for the return of staff and students."

We have established the following schedule:

Monday, October 2

Staff work day.

Student sports activities resume in the East building complex and on the fields.

Tuesday, October 3

Staff work day.

3:30 p.m. Home football game.

Wednesday, October 4

No school at Deer Creek Elementary.

Parents are asked to come to school with their middle and high school students between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Students and parents will be able to meet for conversation with teachers, obtain schedule and room assignment changes, and pick up personal items left during the evacuation.

Thursday, October 5

School will resume the normal schedule.

Counseling services will be available for students throughout the day.



**Pikes Peak  
Mental Health**

2864 South Circle Drive, Suite 620 Phoenix Tower  
Colorado Springs, CO 80906 • (719) 572-6100

## WHERE TO RECEIVE HELP

During this difficult time for your family, your community has resources to help you with grief, depression, crisis and other mental health related concerns. Here are some signs that may indicate you, your family or your child may need additional mental health assistance.

- Signs of self-blame and guilt
- Signs of helplessness and hopelessness
- Signs of not feeling “worthy”
- Signs of a “blue mood” — sadness and despair, continued crying jags at home or in public
- Signs of losing interest in school, work, or with activities they used to enjoy
- Signs of under or over eating
- Signs of alcohol or drug abuse – or using alcohol and drugs to deal with emotional pain
- Signs of a pattern indicating difficulties with sleeping
- Signs of a pattern of nightmares
- Signs of agitation or restlessness
- Signs of panic or fear when in certain situations
- Signs of explosive anger, threats or aggression
- Signs of “re-living” an event “over and over” to include hearing voices associated with the event
- Any other signs of stress that are interfering with “day to day” life

Remember you, your child, or your family do not have to go through these signs and feelings alone. If you, your family or your child need help, please do not hesitate to call, page or e-mail one or more of the following immediate resources in Bailey/Park County.

Mary Pat Bowen  
Park County Victim Services  
303-838-4441; pager: 303-205-4521

or

Karen Quiring  
303-239-2872; cell: 303-902-5377

Kathy Mastroianni  
Park County Crisis Center  
303-838-7176; e-mail: [Kathy@parkcountycrisiscenter.org](mailto:Kathy@parkcountycrisiscenter.org)

Nancy Lewis  
Colorado Association for Victim Assistance (COVA)  
303-861-1160; e-mail: [Cova789@aol.com](mailto:Cova789@aol.com)

If you are in need of immediate emergency crisis mental health assistance, please call the following 24 Hour Pikes Peak Mental Health/Park County Toll-Free Crisis Lines: **303-838-8181 or 866-367-9790**

# Platte Canyon High School Quilt in Memory of Emily Keyes

Donated by Great American Quilt Factory  
8970 E. Hampden Ave., Denver, Colorado 80231  
303.740.6206 • www.greatamericanquilt.com

## The Quilt's Evolution

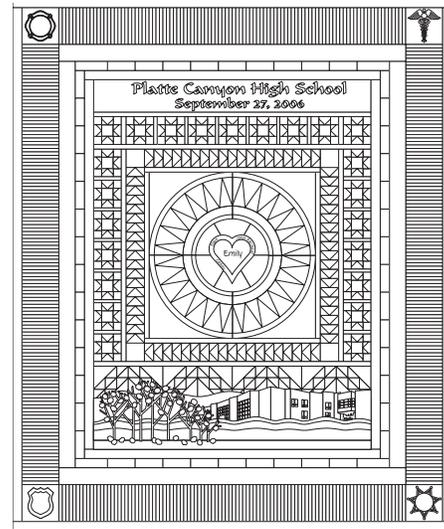
A month or so after the horrifying day of Sept. 27, 2006, Sandra Smith, teacher of the AP English class held hostage at Platte Canyon High School, sent an e-mail to several Denver area quilt shops requesting fabric and supplies to make a quilt. Mrs. Smith thought that making a quilt might help her students work through the process of grieving. Nancy Smith and Lynda Milligan, owners of Great American Quilt Factory, offered their assistance in any way possible—fabric, supplies, design—whatever was needed.

In November, Sandra Smith and the six girls who were held hostage met at Great American Quilt Factory for a brainstorming session on the design of the quilt. The girls talked about and sketched the ideas they wanted represented. The design staff at Great American Quilt Factory also made suggestions. This beautiful quilt is the result of this session. Sandra Smith, her class of AP English students, a staff member, and a mother came to Great American Quilt Factory on January 23, 2007, to begin stitching the quilt. All of the stars surrounding the center medallion, the strips for the piano key border, and the cutting of most of the applique pieces were finished by the students that day.

The pink heart in the center represents Emily Keyes, the young lady who lost her life that day. It was her favorite color and also represents her desire to be an organ donor. In fact, her corneas were donated to a man in North Carolina, and there is now a signed bill to guarantee another ten years of funding for promoting organ donation—the Emily Keyes Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Fund. Surrounding the pink heart is another heart embroidered with the names of her mother, father, and twin brother. The circle surrounding the two hearts consists of six fabrics, each chosen by one of the hostages. The next circle represents their teacher, Sandra Smith. The 24 points surrounding the center represent the students in the class. The school colors of blue and silver follow.

Below the center medallion is a patchwork and applique section that highlights the school, the aspen trees in the fall, and the mountains. Above the center medallion are the school name and the date of the tragedy. The first light blue patched border is signed by faculty and staff members. Quilted in the dark blue border are the words that Emily texted to her family—I love u guys! The individual strips in the light blue “piano keys” border are signed by students in the school.

The girls who were held hostage wanted to show how what started in one classroom expanded to impact an entire community, so the corners showcase insignia of agencies that helped that day—Park County Sheriff's



Department, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, police, fire department, and medical/crisis personnel.

We at Great American Quilt Factory were honored to help design and construct this beautiful quilt and hope that working on it helped in the healing of all involved. What an incredible group of young people. We hope that the quilt will represent the beauty and greatness of the Platte Canyon High School Community. Thank you for letting us be a part of this life-changing project.

The Emily Maureen Ellen Keyes Organ & Tissue Donor Awareness Fund The state of Colorado, beginning in 1998, has asked driver's license applicants to donate \$1 or more to the Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Fund to promote the state's donor registry. Since its inception, the percentage of people agreeing to become organ donors has risen from 33% to 60%.

The fund, which would have expired in 2008 without new legislation, took in \$326,400 last year. Just this month, April 2007, the fund has been extended for 10 years and renamed the Emily Keyes Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Fund.

## Many Thanks

Many thanks to the Great American Quilt Factory family of employees who helped with this project. Our designers, Lexie Foster and Susie Johnson, took all the students' ideas and incorporated them into the layout of this beautiful quilt. Thanks to Ann Petersen who pieced and appliqued much of the quilt, and Sandi Fruehling who quilted it. Many others gave generously of themselves—stitching, cutting, binding, teaching sewing machine skills, and providing snacks. Thanks also to Mitch Jelniker of Channel 7 News and Claire Martin and Andy Cross of The Denver Post for their sensitive coverage of the process. It was truly a community effort.





