

WS1: Template for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for School Crisis Response Mutual Aid

Date _____

This Memorandum of Understanding addresses agreements between the _____ County Office of Education, _____ County Office of Emergency Services, _____ County Mental Health Services, and those school districts within _____ County who agreed to participate.

Purpose

Disasters of a large scale that occur within school districts may overwhelm the resources of that district. While this is an infrequent occurrence, it is best to be prepared for the possibility of such an occurrence by entering into mutual aid agreements with other school districts, county emergency services, and county mental health services. Such mutual aid agreements help institutions offer services to each other following major disasters. Past experience has shown that when a large-scale disaster occurs, it is difficult to coordinate services without some planning.

Background

The origins of this Memorandum can be found in two pieces of legislation. The first is the state Emergency Services Act. This Act is designed to help mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters. Among its provisions, the Act calls for disaster response partnership agreements within and between the various regions of the state. These response partnerships institutionalize the practice of “mutual aid” already employed by emergency response personnel (e.g., firefighters). Mutual aid allows regions to share emergency response resources whenever a given disaster is beyond local control.

The second origin of this agreement can be found in school safety legislation. According to this legislation, all school districts are required to have a school safety plan in place. Part of the safety plan includes disaster response procedures.

Typically, it is expected that individual schools and/or school districts will manage their own crises using their school safety plan. This Memorandum addresses those occurrences, infrequent though they may be, which tax the resources of the school district to the point where outside help is required.

An example of this type of occurrence was the schoolyard shooting in 1989 at Cleveland School in Stockton, California. It required a crisis response that not only overwhelmed the school district’s resources but also overwhelmed the County Mental Health Department. Significant coordination was required to meet the needs of the students and staff. This experience has shown the importance of crisis response planning. (list other local examples as appropriate)

Agreement

1. Each individual school district has the responsibility of responding to its own crises. Additionally, it is the district administration’s responsibility to determine when the resources of the district are no longer adequate to deal with a situation. It is the district administration’s responsibility to ask for assistance when it is deemed necessary. Mutual aid support is not provided without a request from a district-level administrator.
2. If school disaster mutual aid response assistance is needed, a district-level administrator or designee will contact the regional-level Crisis Response Team’s Mutual Aid Coordinator to request assistance. The Mutual Aid Coordinator may be reached Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. through (phone number) or through the 24-hour Crisis Line at (phone number).
3. The regional-level Crisis Response Team’s Mutual Aid Coordinator will record requests for help on a call-out form developed specifically for that purpose. This documentation will indicate who is requesting help, what type

of help is requested, when it is needed, where it is needed, and whether the help being requested is volunteer help or is paid help.

4. The issue of payment is raised because it is possible that an emergency situation can turn into a disaster, which will require federal assistance, at which point there may be reimbursement for costs for disaster response.
5. Following a request for mutual aid assistance, the regional-level Crisis Response Team's Mutual Aid Coordinator will contact appropriate resources for the first response. The choice of which resources or school districts to contact may be based on geographic considerations (i.e., proximity to requesting district), but can also be based on other considerations (i.e., choosing a district that has not already been asked to provide mutual aid support).
6. School districts offering to provide mutual aid to a requesting district will provide only credentialed personnel. Responding Mental Health Services staff will be either licensed clinicians or registered interns (psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed clinical social worker or professional counselor, or marriage or family counselor). Generally speaking, only staff that has been trained in crisis response will be deployed.
7. Responding districts will provide assistance for up to three days. At the end of the three days, further agreements between individual districts, Mental Health Services, Office of Education, and Office of Emergency Services will be necessary in order to provide further assistance.
8. Unless otherwise specified, shifts of work shall be eight hours long for the three-day period.
9. The district requesting the help shall supply supplies for classroom activities, such as art supplies and writing materials, unless otherwise specified in the request for assistance.
10. Participating districts agree to meet annually to ensure appropriate response procedures are still viable.

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

Term

This Memorandum will be in force on the date first signed below, and will be self-renewing. This Memorandum will be reviewed annually. Districts that no longer wish to participate in this Memorandum of Understanding shall notify, in writing, within 30 days, the following departments:

Superintendent, County Schools

Director, County Mental Health Services

Director, Office of Emergency Services

Superintendent, _____ District

Note. Adapted from "Memorandum of Understanding: School Crisis Response Mutual Aid" by R. Speed, San Joaquin County Mental Health Services, 1998. Adapted with permission, public domain. PREPaRE participants may adapt this document for use in their schools.