



Helping Children Cope After the Election

Why does this information matter?

Elections can be a turbulent time for our communities and schools. After elections schools and communities can experience acts of bullying, bias, discrimination, anger and violence. These acts can often cause fear and distress. An act of violence impacts children and youth more than a natural disaster. When an act of violence happens children can experience multiple mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, grief, and guilt, but are not limited to these. It can be hard to go back into their daily routine due to a mistrust in the community and adults around them. Children can also have their physical health impacted and experience long lasting trauma. It is important to know how to support children and youth during these events.

What may be the impact on children?

Regardless of age, children can be deeply impacted after an emergency has affected their support systems. Many times children copy or have reactions based on adult relationships around them. Some children react right away, while others may have difficulties later. How children react can vary according to age, life experience, and support. Children often react based on what they see from adults around them. When school staff, parents and caregivers deal with emergencies calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for children. Please remember that children can become more distressed if they are repeatedly exposed to the event; therefore, limit their exposure to the media.

What can you do to help children cope?

- Stay calm and reassure children.
- Limit the amount of exposure children have to the news and media.
- Provide accurate information about what happened. Keep language simple and age appropriate.
- Launch an on-campus campaign emphasizing tolerance and acceptance.
- Provide children with the opportunity to talk about what they are going through or what they think about it.
- Encourage children to ask questions. Let the child's needs dictate the conversation.
- Give children time to process what is happening.
- Keep routines as regular as possible.
- Spend extra time with children.
- Recognize that high stress events have a direct impact on cognitive functioning which may result in lowered abilities to concentrate, learn, integrate new information, process their emotions, communicate and perform. Allow children extra time on assignments or shorten assignments.
- Give children choices. Many times children experience a loss of control and chaos that



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occurs in an emergency, you can help children feel safe by giving them some choices when appropriate.

- Anticipate difficult times and provide additional support.

Resources:

Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities: [Day After Election Guide](#)

- REMS: [Planning for protests at K-12 schools](#)
- Constructive Dialogue Institute: [Maintaining Campus Community During the 2024 Election](#)
- Boston College: [Teaching After An Election](#); [Teaching During a Tumultuous Election Year](#)
 - Additional resources also available
- Campus Safety Magazine: [10 Steps to Mitigating Possible Election-Related Unrest on Campus](#)