

Dear Parents,

McKinney ISD Counselors serve in four major capacities on their campuses: Response Services, Guidance, Individual Planning, and System Support. Counselors have special training and are prepared to respond to the needs and concerns of students and parents. In light of the recent events at Sandy Hook Elementary School below are some recommendations to help children in coping with traumatic events:

- Try and keep routines as normal as possible. Children gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.
- Be honest with children and share with them as much information as they are **developmentally** able to handle. (See resources below).
- Listen to children's fears and concerns.
- Reassure children that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who do bad things.
- Parents and adults need to first deal with and assess their own responses to crisis and stress.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.
- Provide your children with ongoing opportunities to talk about what they went through or what they're seeing on TV.
- Encourage them to ask questions and express their concerns. Make it clear that there are no bad feelings.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to admit it. Don't jeopardize your child's trust in you by making something up.
- Watch for physical signs of stress. The symptoms of traumatic stress may appear as physical complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, or sleep disturbances.
- **Monitor television watching. Limit your child's exposure to graphic images and videos. If you allow them to watch news reports (depending upon age), make sure to watch them together. This will give you a good opportunity to talk and answer questions.**

The traumatic event or disaster may trigger or bring up unrelated fears and issues in your children. Acknowledge and validate these concerns, even if they don't seem relevant to you. Remember that children often personalize situations. They may worry about their own safety or that of their family, even if the traumatic event occurred far away. Reassure your child and help him or her place the situation in context.

Parents may find the following resources helpful:

Talking to Children About Violence (with age appropriate suggestions)

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf

Talking to Your Children about School Shootings from the American Psychological Association available at: <http://www.apa.org/topics/violence/school-shooting.aspx> *Age Appropriate*

Conversations with Children About the News <http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/news/>

Tips for Talking with and Helping Children and Youth Cope after a Disaster or Traumatic Event from the US Department of Health and Human Services available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/KEN01-0093R/KEN01-0093R.pdf>

For further information and assistance, please contact your child's school counselor.