WHAT ABOUT THE CHILD WITH SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE?

A Checklist for Parents and Teachers in the Aftermath of Public Tragedy

WATCH FOR AND ATTEND TO

- **Sudden changes in behavior**
- **Feelings of fear, anger, or hopelessness**
- **Withdrawal**
- **Agitation**

BE SUPPORTIVE BY

- **Listening**
- **Sharing your own feelings in an honest and "real" way**
- **Helping children and youth find realistic ways to feel safer**
- **Supporting children and youth express their anger, fear and vulnerability in safe ways**
- **Walking with children who are agitated or anxious**

At School

- **Offer small facilitated discussion groups where young people can talk about their feelings of anger and fear**
- **Provide an adult partner to walk and walk and walk with the child who cannot sit in a discussion group**
- **Identify an adult partner for each child to go to anytime they feel the need to walk, to talk, and to be heard**
- **Provide a nurturing "safe place" for the children to retreat when they are anxious. Fill it with books, puzzles or quiet music**
- **Post important resource phone numbers for children and youth in well-traveled areas near telephones**
- **Call the national Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health at 703-684-7710 to get information about your local chapter**
- **Always reach out to your local community-based supports: mental health centers, churches, cultural elders, spiritual leaders, friends and neighbors**

The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health offers this checklist as a guide to help your child or student with emotional, behavioral or mental disorders cope with public tragedies. It is not to replace individual therapeutic supports, but to help you support your child or student.

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Could this have been my child?
How to identify youth at risk of violent behavior

A Checklist for Parents and Teachers to Identify Youth at Risk of Violent Behavior

Youth likely to engage in violent behavior may:

- ☐ **have a history of early trauma – or of abuse**
- ☐ **believe they do not have a future**
- ☐ **have been exposed to violence at home or in the community**
- ☐ **have participated in the drug economy or have a history of repeated theft**
- ☐ **have experienced abandonment**
- ☐ **express feelings of humiliation or shame**
- ☐ **express distorted notions of justice**
- ☐ **display a lack of compassion**

> "It would make a particular difference for troubled boys, who are most likely to act out violent scenarios when they reach the desperate point of no return – when they, depressed, angry, ashamed, and humiliated, are bent upon action to relieve their intolerable state of mind and heart through violent behavior at home, on the streets, or in school." *Garbarino, James; Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them; Ney York; The Free Press; 1999. Page 199*

What to do:

1. **Form or facilitate a relationship based on trust.**
2. **Guide the young person toward positive expression of his feelings.**
3. **Entrust that relationship to a mental health expert.**

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