

Los Angeles Unified School District

Safe School Plan, Volume 3 - Recovery

SECTION 8

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

- **Psychological First Aid Handout** *(English and Spanish)*
- **PFA for Students and Teachers**
- **PFA for Children and Parents**

(available in Spanish at <http://ccis.lausd.net>)



Los Angeles Unified School District

School Mental Health Services

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment

PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.

ESC North

Kezia Miller

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
kezia.miller@lausd.net
(818) 758-2300

ESC West

Nancy Jefferson

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
nancy.jefferson@lausd.net
(323) 754-2856
(323) 750-5167

ESC East

Socorro Valderrama

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
socorro.valderrama@lausd.net
(323) 224-3363

ESC South

Jan Nolan

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
jan.nolan@lausd.net
(310) 513-8070

ISIC

Martha Marquez

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
martha.marquez@lausd.net
(213) 241-0100

Central

Pia Escudero

Director
pia.escudero@lausd.net
(213) 241-3841

Cecilia Ramos

Assistant Director
cecilia.ramos@lausd.net
(213) 241-3841

Ailleth Tom

Coordinator, CCIS
ailleth.tom@lausd.net
(213) 241-2174



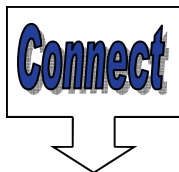
#1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Just listen and pay attention to the child.
- Observe non verbal communication. Remember that student(s) may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.
- **Caution:** Do not investigate or probe for details; you may trigger trauma reminders or jeopardize a legal investigation if questions are leading.



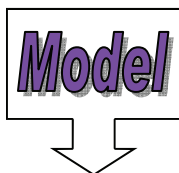
#2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Follow District Guidelines and procedures regarding notification of an administrator.
- Children need to hear that what happened is not their fault and that they did the right thing by telling.
- Conduct the discussion in private and reassure the student that the disclosure enables adults to help and protect.
- Maintain daily routines, activities and structure with clear expectations, consistent rules.
- **Caution:** Do not express doubt or disbelief.
- **Caution:** Do not make judgmental statements or place blame.



#3 CONNECT through interaction, activities & resources.

- Explain your responsibility to report.
- Explain your duty to protect and keep student(s) safe.
- Consider referring the student to your learning support staff (psychiatric social worker, school psychologists, counselor, nurse) finding resources on campus that can offer support to student(s).
- "Check in" with student(s) on a regular basis.
- **Caution:** Do not make promises or false assurances.



#4 MODEL

- It is good to be aware of your thoughts and feelings, and reactions about the event. They can affect your students. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues and it will influence how your students cope and behave.
- Monitor conversations that students may hear.
- **Caution:** Do not express shock or anger at the possible perpetrator or event.
- **Caution:** Students often love the person who mistreats them.



#5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

- Student(s) may have different reactions, even to the same event.
- Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Help your students problem solve to get through each day successfully.
- Help students set small "doable" goals and share in these achievements as "wins."
- **Caution:** With time and support, students generally do better. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a parent or a teacher they know.

The PFA: Listen, Protect, Connect Model was created in partnership by UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters, LAUSD Trauma Services Adaptation Center and the National Center for the School Crisis and Bereavement.

The authors M. Schreiber, R. Gurwitsch, and M. Wong have authorized this adaptation.

For more information, contact your local School Mental Health Staff Member or visit www.tsaforschools.org



Distrito Escolar Unificado de Los Angeles

Servicios de Salud Mental

Primeros Auxilios Psicológicos (PFA)

Directrices Generales para atender las Necesidades de Salud Mental dentro del Entorno Escolar

PFA es un enfoque en la evidencia informada para ayudar a los niños, adolescentes, adultos, maestros y a las familias durante el período justamente después de un incidente crítico, desastre, o acto terrorista. El programa de PFA está diseñado para reducir el estrés inicial causado por eventos traumáticos y promover la adaptación a corto y largo plazo.

ESC Norte

Kezia Miller

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
kezia.miller@lausd.net
(818) 758-2300

ESC Oeste

Nancy Jefferson

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
nancy.jefferson@lausd.net
(323) 754-2856
(323) 750-5167

ESC Este

Socorro Valderrama

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
socorro.valderrama@lausd.net
(323) 224-3363

ESC Sur

Jan Nolan

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
jan.nolan@lausd.net
(310) 513-8070

ISIC

Martha Marquez

Mental Health Field
Coordinator
martha.marquez@lausd.net
(213) 241-0100

Central

Pia Escudero

Director
pia.escudero@lausd.net
(213) 241-3841

Cecilia Ramos

Assistant Director
cecilia.ramos@lausd.net
(213) 241-3841

Ailleth Tom

Coordinator, CCIS
ailleth.tom@lausd.net
(213) 241-2174

Escuche

1 ESCUCHE lo que dicen y cómo actúan.

- Sólo escuchen y presten atención al niño.
- Observen la comunicación no verbal. Recuerden que el estudiante (s) también puede mostrar sus sentimientos en formas no verbales, como el aumento de problemas de conducta o mayor retraimiento.
- Precaución:** No investigue o trate de obtener más detalles, porque esto puede desencadenar los recuerdos del trauma o poner en peligro una investigación judicial si las preguntas son importantes.

Proteja

2 PROTEJA al mantener una estructura, estabilidad y constancia.

- Siga las normas y procedimientos del distrito relativos a notificarle esta situación a un administrador.
- Los niños necesitan saber que lo que pasó no es culpa de ellos y que hicieron lo correcto al decirlo.
- Lleve a cabo la conversación en privado y tranquilice al estudiante de que lo que le comunique les permite a los adultos ayudarlos y protegerlos.
- Mantenga la estructura, las rutinas y las actividades diarias con expectativas claras y reglas coherentes.
- Precaución:** No exprese duda o incredulidad.
- Precaución:** No haga declaraciones sentenciosas ni culpe a nadie.

Conéctese

3 CONÉCTESE a través de la interacción, actividades y recursos.

- Explique la responsabilidad que usted tiene de reportar la situación.
- Explique su deber de proteger y mantener seguro al estudiante.
- Considere la posibilidad de referir al estudiante a su personal de apoyo de aprendizaje (trabajador social psiquiátrico, psicólogo escolar, consejero, enfermera) para que busque los recursos dentro del plantel que puedan ofrecerle apoyo al estudiante.
- "Vea" al estudiante regularmente.
- Precaución:** No haga promesas o garantías falsas.

Sea un Modelo

4 SEA UN MODELO

- Es bueno estar consciente de sus pensamientos, sentimientos y reacciones sobre el evento. Esto puede afectar a sus estudiantes. Sus estudiantes estarán mirando sus señales verbales y no verbales y esto influirá la manera en la que sus estudiantes se comportarán y harán frente a la situación.
- Monitoree las conversaciones que los estudiantes puedan escuchar.
- Precaución:** No exprese sorpresa o enojo por el posible causante del evento.
- Atención:** Los estudiantes a menudo aman a la persona que los maltrata.

Enseñe

5 ENSEÑE los cambios normales que pueden ocurrir cuando sufren algún trauma.

- Los estudiantes pueden tener diferentes reacciones, incluso para el mismo evento.
- Exhorte a sus estudiantes a que identifiquen y utilicen estrategias positivas para que puedan lidiar con la situación y la afronten positivamente después del evento.
- Ayude a los estudiantes a que adquieran técnicas para resolver su problema con el fin de ayudarlos a lidiar cada día con éxito.
- Ayude a los estudiantes a fijar metas pequeñas y "factibles" y compartir estos logros como "victorias".
- Precaución:** Con el tiempo y el apoyo, a los estudiantes generalmente les va mejor. Si no lo hacen, se les debe animar y enseñar a que pidan ayuda a uno de sus padres o a un maestro que conozcan.

El Modelo PFA: Escuchar, Proteger y Conectar fue creado en colaboración con el Centro de Salud Pública y Desastres de UCLA, el Centro de Adaptación de Servicios para Traumas del LAUSD y el Centro Nacional para las Crisis Escolares y Pérdidas Sufridas. Los autores M. Schreiber, Gurwitsch R. y M. Wong han autorizado esta adaptación. Para obtener más información, póngase en contacto con un Miembro del Personal de Salud Mental Escolar o visite www.tsaforschools.org

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID (PFA) FOR
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**



**Helping you help your students
in times of disaster, school
crises, or emergencies.**

As a teacher, you are in an excellent position to help your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency.



Just as you help connect students with appropriate academic and counseling services under normal circumstances, you are in an excellent position to help your students return to school, stay in school, continue to learn, and return to their usual school-based activities after such an event.

You can help your students if you

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

the **steps of PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID** for your students after
a disaster, school crisis, or
emergency.

These steps can help them
bounce back more quickly.

Getting Started: Understanding the Effect of a Disaster, School Crisis, or Emergency

THINK ABOUT your students’
“**DIRECT EXPERIENCE**” with the
event.

“Direct experience” means a **FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE** of the event (physically experiencing or directly seeing it as it happens).

After the event, changes can happen in students’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Your students may worry about family members, classmates, friends, or pets they care about, and may worry that it will happen again.

Common reactions to disasters, school crises and emergencies include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble concentrating and listening, and not finishing work or assignments. Your students may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience recovery efforts after the event.

When students share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the event, LISTEN for RISK FACTORS for adverse reactions.

Risk factors that may indicate a counseling referral is needed for students include:

- ☐ loss of a family member, schoolmate, or friend
- ☐ observing serious injury or the death of another person
- ☐ family members or friends missing after the event
- ☐ getting hurt or becoming sick due to the event
- ☐ home loss, family moves, changes in neighborhoods, changes in schools, and/or loss of belongings
- ☐ being unable to evacuate quickly
- ☐ past traumatic experiences or losses
- ☐ pet loss

If a student has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider referring her or him to your school psychologist, counselor, or social worker.

Now that you know what can affect your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency, you're ready to
**LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT –
MODEL & TEACH!**

1. Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

The first important step to help your students after an event is to **listen and pay attention** to what they say and how they act. Remember that your students may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, like increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.

Let your students know you are willing to listen and talk about the event, or to make referrals to talk to an appropriate professional, if they prefer it. Use the following questions to talk with your students. **You can listen for clues that indicate when students are having a hard time. Write down a few examples that may be helpful to note:**

1. What might be preventing a student from coming to or staying in school?

2. What might be preventing a student from paying attention in class or doing homework?

3. What might be preventing a student from returning to other school-based activities?



Listen, observe, and note any changes in:

- * behavior and/or mood
- * school performance
- * interactions with schoolmates and teachers
- * participation in school-based activities
- * behaviors at home that parents discuss with you

Listen, 2. Protect, Connect – Model & Teach

You can **help make your students feel better** by doing some or all of the following:

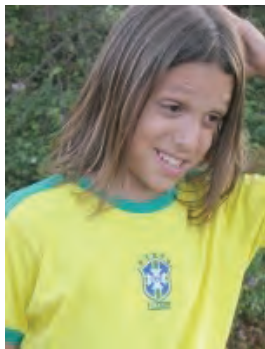


- * Answer questions simply and honestly, clearing up confusion students may have about what happened.
- * Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions to the event.
- * Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but **don't force it**.
- * Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe from harm.
- * Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students.
- * Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviors.

- * Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations, consistent rules, and immediate feedback; limit unnecessary changes.
- * Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning.
- * Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event.
Remember, what's not upsetting to you and other adults may upset and confuse your students, and vice versa.
- * Encourage students to “take a break” from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event.
- * Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community.

List other **things you do** that help your students feel better. Sharing lists with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.

Listen, Protect, 3. Connect – Model & Teach



Reaching out to people in your school and community will help your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency. These connections will build

strength for everyone. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- * “Check in” with students on a regular basis.
- * Find resources that can offer support to your students and classroom.
- * Keep communication open with others involved in your students’ lives (parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
- * Restore interactive school activities, including sports, club meetings, student-serviced projects, and student government.

- * Encourage student activities with friends, including class projects and extracurricular activities.
- * Empathize with your students by allowing a little more time for them to learn new materials.
- * Build on your students' strengths. Find ways to help them use what they have learned in the past to help them deal with the event.
- * Remind your students that major disasters, crises, and emergencies are rare, and discuss other times they have felt safe.

List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community. Share your list with other teachers to create a larger list of activities and resources.

Listen, Protect, Connect – 4. Model & Teach

As you help your students after a disaster, crisis, or emergency, your **efforts may be more successful** – and you may be less stressed – if you **keep in mind:**

- * It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event, which can be seen and can affect your students.



- * How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your students cope and behave. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and nonverbal cues.
- * Monitor conversations that students may hear.
- * Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.

For more information, please visit **www.ready.gov**

Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & 5. Teach

Talk to your students about **expected reactions after a crisis** (emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and physiological). There are “normal” reactions to abnormal events.

- * Different people may have very different reactions, even within the same family. After the event, people may also have different amounts of time they need to cope and adjust.
- * **Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.**
- * Help your students problem-solve to get through each day successfully.
- * **Help your students set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins” for the students and your classroom.**
- * Remind students that with time and assistance, things generally get better. If they don’t, they should let a parent or teacher know.



It is okay for you to seek professional help for yourself:

- ✓ When you have feelings of being overwhelmed or overly stressed that don't go away over time.
- ✓ When you are not sure about how to handle a situation with a student or a family member.

Over time,

- * **you,**
- * **your students,**
- * **their families,**
- * **your classroom,**

can EXPECT RECOVERY.



For More Information

Please visit **www.ready.gov**

Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with U.S.

Department of Homeland Security. The *Ready* Campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks

and

www.cincinnatichildrens.org/school-crisis

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement.

**For more information on
Listen, Protect, Connect —
Model and Teach**

contact Dr. Merritt Schreiber at m.schreiber@ucla.edu.

Acknowledgements



Thanks to the support of the following centers at the University of California Los Angeles, School of Public Health: **Center for Public Health and Disasters** and **Health and Media Research Group**. The authors also thank **Crisis Counseling & Intervention Services** of the **Los Angeles Unified School District**.



**“Listen, Protect, and Connect — Model & Teach”
Psychological First Aid for Children**

© 2006 M. Schreiber, R. Gurwitsch, M. Wong.
All rights reserved.

copy editor/designer: Rachel C. Flores

For more information, please visit **www.ready.gov**

For more information, please visit www.ready.gov

Listen, Protect, and Connect

**PSYCHOLOGICAL
FIRST AID FOR
CHILDREN AND PARENTS**



**Helping you and your child
in times of disaster.**

As a parent, you are in the best position to help your child in the event of a disaster.



Just as you talk to your child's doctor about his or her health, such as what to do when your child is sick or hurt, you can also talk to your child's

doctor, mental health professional, or someone at your child's school who can help you and your child after a disaster.

You can help your child if you

Listen, Protect, and Connect

the **three steps of “psychological first aid”** for your child after a disaster.

These steps can help your child bounce back from a disaster.

For more information, please visit [**www.ready.gov**](http://www.ready.gov)

Getting Started: Understanding the Effect of a Disaster on Your Child

THINK ABOUT your child's
“**DIRECT EXPERIENCE**” with the
disaster.

“Direct experience” means a **FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE** of the disaster (physically experiencing or directly seeing the event as it happens).

After a disaster, changes can happen in a child's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Children may worry about family members, friends, or pets that they care about and worry if the disaster will happen again.

Common reactions to disasters include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble listening, and not finishing work or chores. Your child may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience the recovery efforts after the disaster.

THINK ABOUT and IDENTIFY “CONTRIBUTING FACTORS” that can increase your child’s reaction to the disaster.

“Contributing factors” include (check all that apply to your child):

- ☐ loss of a family member or friend
- ☐ seeing serious injury or the death of another person
- ☐ family members who are missing after the disaster
- ☐ getting hurt or becoming sick due to the disaster
- ☐ being unable to evacuate quickly
- ☐ home loss, family moves, changes in schools or neighborhoods, and/or loss of belongings
- ☐ past traumatic experiences
- ☐ pet loss

If your child has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider talking to his or her doctor, a child mental health professional, or someone at your child’s school to get help.

Now that you know about things that can affect your child after a disaster, you’re ready to
LISTEN, PROTECT, and CONNECT!

1. Listen, Protect, and Connect

The first important step to help your child after a disaster is to **listen and pay attention** to what your child says and how he or she acts. Remember that your child may also show his or her feelings in nonverbal ways.

Let your child know you are willing to listen and talk about the disaster. You can use the following questions to talk with your child. Afterward, **write down how he or she answers:**



1. What does your child think happened and is now happening?

2. What does your child understand about the help disaster responders give to people during and after an event?

3. What is your child most upset about?

4. What is your child most confused about?

5. Other items to note:

Listen, observe, and take notes about **changes in behavior** you see:

* Changes in behavior and/or mood:

* Changes at school:

* Changes in sleep and/or eating:

* Changes with family and/or friends:

* Other changes you note:

Listen, 2. Protect, and Connect

You can **help make your child feel better** by doing some or all of the following:



- * Answer questions simply and honestly (you may need to do this many times).
- * Try to clear up any confusion your child has. Let your child know that he or she is not to blame for the disaster.
- * Provide opportunities for your child to talk, draw, and play, but **don't force it**.
- * Learn what is in place and what is coming up in your neighborhood in response to the disaster.
- * With your child's help, develop a family safety plan and practice it (http://www.ready.gov/kids/_downloads/familyplan.pdf).
- * Talk to your child about what is going on to make him or her safe at home, at school, and in your neighborhood.

- * Limit access to television and newspapers that show disturbing scenes of the disaster. **Remember that what's not upsetting to you and other adults may upset and confuse your child.**
- * Talk about common reactions that adults and children may have during and after a disaster.
- * Maintain “normal” daily tasks and activities as much as possible; limit unnecessary changes.
- * Encourage your child to express his or her thoughts and feelings about what has happened. Let your child know you are interested in what he or she thinks and feels, and listen attentively when your child talks to you.
- * Take a break once in a while from talk and activities related to the disaster.
- * Find ways for your child to feel helpful to your family and others (helping around the house, neighborhood, or school).

List other **things you do** that make your child feel better:

Listen, Protect, and 3. Connect



Reaching out to family, friends, and people in your neighborhood will help your child after a disaster. These connections will build strength for both you and your child. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- * Find people who can offer support to your child and your family.
- * Keep communication open with others involved in your child's life (doctors, teachers, coaches, etc.).
- * Check out school and community resources for disaster survivors.
- * Spend extra time with your child and family.

- * Encourage after-school activities for your child.
- * Have a family meeting and discuss how everyone can stay in touch if separated during or after a disaster. Create a Family Communications Plan (http://www.ready.gov/kids/_downloads/familyplan.pdf).
- * Set small goals with your child. Praise him or her for even small achievements.
- * Build on your child's strengths. Find ways to help your child use what he or she has learned in the past to help your child deal with the disaster.
- * Remind your child that a disaster is rare, and discuss other times when he or she has felt safe.
- * Learn and seek out other information that may be helpful to you, your child, and family.

List other **things you do** that connect you, your child, and family with the community:

Keep in Mind

As you help your child after a disaster, your **“listen, protect, and connect”** efforts may be more successful — and you may be less stressed — if you keep in mind:

- * It is good to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about the event, which can be seen and can affect your child.
- * How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your child copes and behaves.
- * Show your child the importance of keeping up good physical and mental health even during stressful times.
- * Each family member may have a different way or time period needed to cope with disaster.
- * Children of different ages understand and react differently to disasters.
- * A child's behavior may get worse before it gets better.
- * Your child may be more demanding of your time and attention.

- * Extra patience with your child is needed.
- * For many children, any different behavior due to a disaster improves over time.
- * Your child will look to you as a role model for handling the disaster and what happens next.

It is okay to seek professional help:

- ✓ If you checked off any boxes on page 5.
- ✓ When your child's behavior is not getting better over time.
- ✓ When you or other family members have feelings of being overwhelmed or overly stressed that don't go away over time.
- ✓ When you are not sure about how to handle a situation with your child.
- ✓ When you feel unsure, not able, or unfamiliar with how to guide your child.

**Remember that you
and your child can
EXPECT RECOVERY.**

For More Information

Please visit **www.ready.gov**

Ready is a national public service advertising campaign produced by The Advertising Council in partnership with U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The *Ready* Campaign is designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

**For more information on
Listen, Protect, and Connect:
Psychological First Aid
for Children and Parents,**
contact Dr. Merritt Schreiber
at **m.schreiber@ucla.edu**.

Acknowledgements



Thanks to the support of the following centers at the University of California Los Angeles, School of Public Health:
Center for Public Health and Disasters and **Health and Media Research Group.**



**Listen, Protect, and Connect:
Psychological First Aid for Children and Parents**

© 2006 M. Schreiber and R. Gurwitch.
All rights reserved.

copy editor/designer: Rachel C. Flores

For more information, please visit [**www.ready.gov**](http://www.ready.gov)