

Tips for School Mental Health Providers: Addressing Police/Community Conflicts

In light of recent national events involving negative encounters between the police and community members, we are all left with questions about how to assure safety, equality, and justice within our local, state, and national communities. Police/community conflicts prompt a range of strong emotions, perspectives, and actions. As a school mental health provider your support is critical to promoting positive emotion expression, coping and adjustment following upsetting events in the community.

As a school mental health provider, how can you best respond?

Some best practices to consider:

- Prioritize staff and student safety; be aware of and follow safety plans within your school and district
- Work closely with your school team of educators, student support team members and administrators to determine how to best offer support (including grief counseling, safety planning, etc.)
- Offer meeting times and locations for students who would like to discuss and share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about the events
- Focus discussions and actions on student, family, classroom, school-wide and community level strengths, coping and healing
- Remain a positive, politically neutral supportive entity in the school
- Validate and reflect back on thoughts and feelings students and families express
- Discuss and offer healthy strategies to process feeling of anger, sadness, anxiety and fear
- Support students' exploration of how they can express their opinions in productive and non-violent ways
- Encourage peaceful expression of thoughts and feelings
- Empower students and families to talk together about their feelings and the larger social issues underlying recent events
- Don't forget to ensure and maintain confidentiality in student and family contacts
- Pay attention to your own emotional wellness and regularly practice self-care strategies