



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: 15/07/2020

SAAC CIRCULAR NO 02/20

FROM: The HEAD NATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

TO: All Head Teachers and Principals

RE: PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT CIRCULAR

1. What is Psychosocial support?

Psychosocial support addresses the ongoing psychological and social problems caused by COVID 19 and TC Harold and its associated socio-economic effects. It helps in healing psychological wounds and rebuilds social structures after emergency or critical events. It further helps change the people into active survivors rather than passive victims.

2. Understanding children mental health status

Some of the children who are coming back to school after three [3] months would have had these experiences:

- parent/ guardians unemployed,
- physically and sexually abused,
- engaged casual employment,
- breaking curfew orders,
- using and abusing drugs,
- cyber/ physically bullied,
- relocation of residence and school,
- domestic violence... etc.

All these unpleasant experiences would traumatized the children and can affect their ability to cope when they are back in school.

3. Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

It is critically important for teachers to be vigilant and very observant of the signs that students would show indicating they need help. Some of the signs and symptoms that would be displayed by children are given below.

Preschool children [4 – 5 years old]	Primary school children [6 – 14 years old]	High school children [15 – 18 years old]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel helpless and uncertain • Fear of being separated from their parents/caregivers • Cry and or Scream a lot • Eat poorly and lose weight • Return to bed wetting • Return to using baby talk • Develop new fears • Have nightmares • Recreate the trauma through the play • Not developing to the next stage • Have changes in behaviour • Ask questions about death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become anxious and fearful • Worry about their own and other safety • Becoming clingy with teachers or a parent • Feel guilt and shame • Tell others about the traumatic event again and again • Become upset very easily • Have a hard time concentrating • Experiencing numbness • Have fear that the event will happen again • Have difficulty sleeping • Show changes in school performance • Become easily startled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel depressed and alone • Discuss traumatic event in detail • Develop eating disorder and self-harming behaviour such as cutting. • Start using or abusing alcohol, other drugs and substances. • Become sexually active • Feel like they are going crazy • Feel different from everyone else • Take too many risks • Have sleep disturbances • Do not want to go places that remind them of the event • Say they have no feeling about the event • Show changes in behaviour

Source: <http://cctasi.northwestern.edu/family/child-trauma/>

4. What to do when you observe the signs

- i. Get someone [teacher] whom the child trusts to have a “talanoa” session with the child asking if everything is fine?
- ii. If the child needs help, discuss with school heads on the best way forward.
- iii. School head to inform the parents/ guardian for support.
- iv. Seek assistance and guidance from Divisional Counsellors or SAAC Counsellors
- v. Further assistance to be also obtained from Department of Social Welfare. Child Welfare Act [CWA] form to be filled and submitted to SW if need be.
- vi. The child to be referred to professional counsellors who will conduct further assessment.

5. What can teachers do to help a traumatized child

- i. Make the child feel safe while in school
- ii. Act calm. Children look to adults for reassurance and safety
- iii. Maintain normal routines as much as possible
- iv. Listen well: Let kids know it is OK to tell you how they are feeling at any time.
- v. Encourage kids to do activities and play with others
- vi. Help children relax with breathing exercises. Breathing becomes shallow when anxiety sets in; deep belly breaths can help children to calm down.
- vii. Acknowledge what the child is feeling
- viii. Remember if student share personal stories, maintain confidentiality.

6. Observing Basic Health Safety during this time

It is important to regularly remind students on the importance of basic health tips to keep them safe.

- i. Regular washing of hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer.
- ii. Cough or sneeze into handkerchief, tissue paper or bent elbow.
- iii. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth as hands touch many surfaces.
- iv. Try and maintain social distancing in crowded places.
- v. Stay home when they are sick and only report to school when they are well.
- vi. Drinking plenty of water and eating fruit snacks daily.

7. Self-care for teachers

Teachers need to prioritize their health and practice self-care.

- i. Make a plan that prioritizes your personal and teaching responsibilities
- ii. Where unforeseen events occur and makes it difficult to carry out your professional work, switch to alternative tasks like catching up on pending work, going online to improve your professional knowledge and skills or read an inspiring book.
- iii. Maintain a routine. A daily routine provides a sense of normalcy at an abnormal time.
- iv. Physical exercise. Try and to walk or run for 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes again in the afternoon. If stuck in doors, use social media, YouTube, zoom to dance and exercise.
- v. Stay connected. Use the internet to stay connected with friends, family and colleagues. Aim to get at least one good laugh from each connection.
- vi. Limit online news consumption. Continually checking the social media news is a way to cause unnecessary anxiety and stress. Decide how much time per day you will spend online checking reliable sources and keep to the limit.
- vii. Practice relaxation techniques. Breathing exercise, power nap, close your eyes and be aware of yourself and surrounding are few examples.
- viii. Learn something new. This is a good time to improve your professional knowledge, skills and self-development. Aim to learn something new to distract yourself and keep yourself engaged in learning.
- ix. Give yourself a break. While we strive to be kind to others, it's important to be kind to oneself.
- x. Learn to love yourself and look after your health. Get 8 solid hours sleep, eat healthy food, drink plenty water and focus on your positive qualities.
- xi. Go for counselling if you need further help

7. For any further information please contact SAAC office on phone numbers: 7734180/7734181/7734182/3394144/ 3394180 or email: nsaaccouncil@gmail.com

Yours sincerely



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