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.

Local District 1&2
(818) 997-2640

Local District 3
(323) 750-5167

Local District 4&6
(323) 869-1352

Local District 5
(323) 224-3351

Local District 7&8
(323) 754-2856

Central
(213) 241-3841

#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.
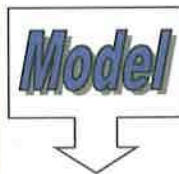
#2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.
- Follow District Guidelines and procedures regarding notification of an administrator.
- Children need to hear that what happened is not their fault and that they did the right thing by telling.
- Conduct the discussion in private and 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.

Resources for survivors of childhood molestation

- **Department of Children and Family Services**
Child Protection Hotline 24 hours a Day, 7 Days a Week Toll Free (800) 540-4000

- **Employee Assistance Program**
EAP Phone number (800-285-7717)

- **Incest Survivors Anonymous (I.S.A.)**
562-428-5599, Website: www.lafn.org

- **Male Survivor: National Organization Against Male Sexual Victimization**
1-800-738-4181

- **LA County 211**

- **USC Psychology Services Center**
213-740-1600 www. http://dornsife.usc.edu/usc-psychology-services-center