

ADIRONDACK DIVERSITY INITIATIVE'S

SCHOOLYARD RESPONSE TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO PREVENTING AND
ADDRESSING HARMFUL INCIDENTS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3...Introduction

4...Stakeholder Roles

5...Incident Prevention

6...Incident Response

7...Post-Incident Response

8...Restorative Conversations

10...Conversation Tips

11...Conversation Protocols

14...References & Resources





TOOLKIT INTRODUCTION

This toolkit contains resources that guide interventions before, during, and after situations that emotionally harm a young person. For instance, adults must intervene quickly when a child hits another on the playground. Similarly, when a child is targeted due to their identities or beliefs, such as race, gender, religion, or physical abilities, they also deserve immediate protection from adults. However, many people are unsure how to respond effectively in these situations, which can lead to silence or delays in support, leaving the child feeling neglected or unsupported.

To address this, we have developed these resources to help parents, teachers, families, and other stakeholders respond swiftly and compassionately, ensuring a child's safety and addressing their social-emotional needs.

PREVENT. RESPOND. HEAL.





WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Whether you are supporting a child who has been affected by harm or guiding one who has caused it, each role is vital in fostering empathy, understanding, and healing.

FAMILY & CAREGIVERS

Create a safe and open space for your child to express their feelings. Ask plenty of questions to understand their perspective. It's okay not to have all the answers. Being honest and acknowledging that you don't know something can be a powerful tool. Let your child know you'll seek out answers and share what you've learned. Take time to learn about other cultures and perspectives, and remember that actions often speak louder than words.



SCHOOL & PROGRAM STAFF

Listen actively, especially when things are going well. Active listening helps with early intervention and can prevent future incidents. Working as a team is essential. Communicate openly with staff members, share observations, and support one another. Collaboration ensures consistency and strengthens your collective ability to respond effectively. Building strong relationships with students and setting clear expectations around community values are essential for fostering a positive and safe environment.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Reach out and offer support wherever possible. Let students, families, and organizations know how you can assist and commit to taking action when needed. Speak up and leverage your resources and expertise to help prevent incidents and create solutions. When the community is actively involved and supportive, everyone benefits.



INCIDENT PREVENTION



Creating a safe and inclusive student environment is essential for fostering a positive atmosphere where every student feels valued and respected. By taking a few simple steps, you can proactively prevent issues from occurring.

Before an Incident Occurs:

- **Examine Your Climate:** Regularly assess the environment of your school, home, or community. Listen, watch, and learn to understand all the dynamics at play.
- **Stay Current, Stay Connected:** Keep up with current events and societal changes. Stay connected with students to understand their experiences and needs. Frequently engage with all stakeholders and ensure open lines of communication are present.
- **Set Clear Expectations:** Define and communicate expectations for respectful interactions among students.
 - **Promote Kind and Respectful Language:** Clearly communicate that insults related to ability, appearance, culture, gender, home language, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or social class will not be tolerated. Include this language in the school or organization’s handbook.
 - **Post Reminders:** Display signs around your spaces promoting a welcoming environment, such as “Everyone Belongs Here” or “This Is a Judgment-Free Zone.”
- **Make the Most of Teachable Moments:** Use everyday interactions as opportunities to teach empathy, respect, and understanding.
- **Connect with Local Resources:** Build a relationship with local experts to help when an event occurs. Create a publicly accessible resource list for specific issues, including a designated contact person for each. This encourages planning for a variety of potential issues and fosters community connections in advance.



:: INCIDENT RESPONSE

Even with prevention, harmful events can still occur. When they do, having a clear plan on how to quickly address the issues is key.

When an Incident Occurs:

- 1. Put Safety First:** Ensure the immediate safety of all students involved. Quickly relocate students involved to separate areas where they can receive appropriate adult support. Ensure that they have access to a safe space and assistance without delay.
- 2. Denounce the Hurtful Act:** Clearly condemn the harmful behavior.
- 3. Create Safe Spaces for Support:** Offer support without putting those hurt on the spot. Support first, and ask questions when ready.
- 4. Inform Families and Caregivers Promptly:** It is critical to notify all families and caregivers as soon as possible when an incident occurs.
- 5. Ask Questions and Investigate With Care:** Gather information to understand the incident's context. Sit or kneel to be at eye level with the students, creating a safe and approachable environment. Restorative Conversation frameworks are helpful to follow [page 8].
- 6. Utilize Your Community:** Involve teachers, counselors, and families in tackling the situation. Families must always be informed. You might also need to reach out to additional local resources for support.
- 7. Communicate Accurate Details:** It is important to quickly dispel any misinformation surrounding the incident.
- 8. Seek Healing, Avoid Blame:** Focus on resolving the issue rather than assigning blame. Avoiding shame and blame is critical when working towards understanding.

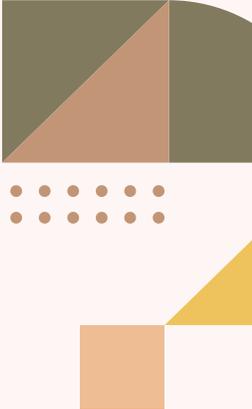


POST-INCIDENT RESPONSE

Taking time to reflect and process is just as important as handling the event itself. It is crucial to consider what worked well and how to enhance future responses to prevent similar occurrences.

- **Promote Continued Healing:** Following an event, it is essential to maintain ongoing check-ins with the parties involved. Feeling seen and valued is essential to the healing process, which takes time.
- **Reflect:** Evaluate what worked well and identify areas for improvement. Creating a system for documentation and reflection ensures the continued growth and improvement of school culture.
 - **Document Each Event**
 - Record the exact date and time of each incident and describe what occurred. You may want to include a category system for deeper analysis.
 - List all individuals or groups involved or affected
 - Specify the corrective actions taken to resolve the incident.
 - **Analyze Your Data**
 - Track the frequency of incidents and look for patterns and trends in the data over time. Are there individuals repeatedly involved in incidents? Are there specific locations, times of day, or events when they occur?
 - Set specific times to reflect on data [i.e., mid-year and end-of-school year].
 - **Set Goals**
 - After analyzing the data, use it to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
 - Set goals that clearly aim to decrease the rate of incidents and share these goals with staff and families.

FOSTERING HEALING THROUGH RESTORATIVE CONVERSATIONS



WHAT IS A RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION?

Conflicts and misunderstandings are inevitable, especially when working with children and young adults. Addressing these issues with empathy and understanding can foster healing and growth. Restorative conversations offer a structured approach to help students constructively navigate their emotions and experiences. This section focuses on implementing these conversations to create a supportive environment for all parties involved.

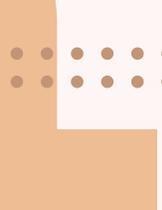
PLANNING FOR A RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION:

- **Communicate with Parents and Caregivers:** Start by explaining that the goal is to work towards healing. Involving the students' families can offer valuable insights and support. Share the benefits of the restorative process, which focuses on fostering growth and improving relationships. Working together is key to creating a supportive network for students.
- **Create a Safe Space:** Classrooms should remain focused on teaching and learning, so conflicts should be addressed in designated spaces for reflection and resolution whenever possible. Facilitators can help students navigate the process using tools such as emotion planners, empathy maps, and decision-making matrices. If possible, create a calming and reflective space for these conversations.

CONDUCTING A RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION

- **Gain Individual Perspective and Empathy:** Hold separate conversations with each student involved in the conflict to understand their perspectives and build empathy.
 - Encourage using “I” statements and empathic listening to validate their feelings. “I feel ___ when ___ because ___”.
 - Ask **affective** questions to gauge the emotional impact of the incident. “How were you affected by their behavior?”
- **Identify and Address the Actions/Behaviors:**
 - **For Hurt Students:** Name and honor the actions that caused pain. Approach their pain with empathy, provide suggestions for healing, and outline possible mediation steps.
 - **For Students That Caused Hurt:** Name the behavior[s] and help them understand the impact of their actions. Offer strategies for making amends.
- **Bring Students Together for Mediation [Optional]:** Once rapport and trust are established, facilitate a mediated conversation to encourage healing and resolution.
 - This step should only be conducted by individuals with **specialized training**, such as social workers or counselors.
 - Assess whether students are ready for mediation and proceed only if everyone, including the families, gives their consent.
 - Guide the conversation to ensure it remains respectful and focused on resolution. A sample mediation script is listed on page 13.





CONVERSATION TIPS

For adults facilitating these conversations with children, here are tips to help guide your conversation:

1. Open Lines of Communication

- Let students know you will listen without judgment. Ask open-ended questions, such as, "How's it going?" or "Can you tell me more about what happened?"

2. Encourage Sharing

- Encourage students to share their perspectives. Ask questions such as, "What were you thinking at the time?" and "What were you feeling?"

3. Identify Root Causes

- Help students understand what led to the incident. Ask about what happened just before the event, and if similar incidents have occurred.

4. Explore & Understand Impact

- Discuss the consequences of their actions on others. Questions like "Who else has been affected?" and "How do you feel now?" can be insightful.

5. Address Needs & Repair

- Suggest steps to healing and improvement. Ask, "What do you need to move forward?" and "What can you do to ensure this doesn't happen again?"

6. Create a Plan

- Establish clear actions for moving forward or working toward resolution. Ensure both parties agree on a plan and commit to checking in on progress.

Following these steps and protocols can create a compassionate environment that promotes understanding and healing for everyone involved. Restorative conversations are more than just resolving conflicts; they are about building stronger, empathetic relationships.



RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION PROTOCOL

FOR STUDENTS BEING HURT

1. **Seek Clarification: "Help Me Understand..."**

- This step involves asking questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experience. The goal is to support and validate their feelings.

2. **Provide Affirmations: "I Hear You..."**

- The facilitator validates their experience by recounting specific observations related to the event.

3. **Address the Hurt: "Let's Explore..."**

- Approach their pain with empathy and invite them to share their perspectives on the hurt caused.

4. **Offer Support: "You Might Find It Helpful..."**

- Provide suggestions, potential approaches, and resources to aid healing and growth.

5. **Reflect and Discuss: "What Do You Need..."**

- Engage in an open conversation where they express their needs and outline steps towards peace, healing, and/or empowerment.

Based on a protocol from Jorge Valenzuela of Lifelong Learning Defined, Inc.



RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION PROTOCOL

FOR STUDENTS CAUSING HURT

1. **Seek Clarification: "Help Me Understand..."**

- Seek clarity through inquiries to develop a comprehensive grasp of the incident from their perspective.

2. **Provide Affirmations: "I Hear You..."**

- Acknowledge the student's positive qualities and highlight strengths that were not apparent during the incident.

3. **Address the Hurt: "Think About Your Impact..."**

- Approach the pain caused by their actions with empathy, inviting them to share their viewpoints.

4. **Offer Guidance: "Consider Ways to Repair..."**

- Offer guidance, potential strategies, and resources aimed at facilitating recovery and growth.

5. **Reflect and Discuss: "What Will You Do..."**

- Encourage students to express their feelings and outline potential actions for reflection, repair, and growth.

Based on a protocol from Jorge Valenzuela of Lifelong Learning Defined, Inc.

SAMPLE MEDIATION CONVERSATION

These conversations should only occur if both parties consent to mediation and the facilitators have training or experience.

Opening: The facilitator introduces themselves and explains the purpose of the meeting. They also share conversation guidelines or norms, which should be established before the meeting and agreed upon before proceeding [such as sharing openly, using “I” statements, and listening actively].

To the Student(s) Causing Hurt:

- From your perspective, what happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- Who do you think has been impacted? In what ways?
- Who else may have been affected? In what ways?
- How do you feel about your actions when you look back at the event?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- Is there anything more you’d like to share?

To the Student(s) Being Hurt:

- From your perspective, what happened?
- What was it like for you as the situation was happening? What were you thinking/feeling?
- How have you been affected?
- How has this event affected others in your life? In what ways?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- Is there anything more you’d like to share?

To the Student(s) Causing Hurt: What have you heard?

To the Student(s) Being Hurt: Do you feel heard? Does anything need to be clarified?

To each person: What do you believe needs to happen now to make things right? Collaborate as a team to create a plan to move forward. Consider creating a written agreement if appropriate for the situation.

Closing: The facilitator asks each person how they now feel about the situation and reviews the next steps.

REFERENCES

This toolkit is based on well-researched and proven strategies from reputable organizations, as well as the dedicated efforts of the team at the Adirondack Diversity Initiative.

- [A BLUEPRINT FOR RESTORATIVE CONVERSATIONS](#) | EDUTOPIA | EDUTOPIA.ORG
- [LEARNING FOR JUSTICE](#) | SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER | LEARNINGFORJUSTICE.ORG
- [RACISM IN THE CLASSROOM: WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT](#) | CENTER FOR PARENT AND TEEN COMMUNICATION | PARENTANDTEEN.COM
- [RESPONDING TO HATE AND BIAS AT SCHOOL](#) | A PUBLICATION OF TEACHING TOLERANCE | TOLERANCE.ORG
- [RESTORATIVE CONFERENCING FACILITATOR'S HANDBOOK](#) | RESTORATIVE RESOURCES | RESTORATIVERESOURCES.ORG
- [RESTORATIVE CONVERSATIONS](#) | CONFLICT CENTER | CONFLICTCENTER.ORG
- [TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT RACE AND RACISM \(FOR PARENTS\)](#) | NEMOURS KIDSHEALTH | KIDSHEALTH.ORG



ADIRONDACK DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

Supporting Communities in Fostering
Safe and Welcoming Spaces



www.diversityadk.org
diversity@adirondack.org