

Chapter 6

FAITH-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

PRE-PLAN PREVENTION PHASE RECOMMENDATION

JUSTIFICATION FOR AN ORGANIZED FAITH-BASED RESPONSE

Trained clergy¹ are specifically equipped to *spiritually assist* individuals who request such help in crisis situations. In light of our school visits, it has become very apparent that clergy have been made available and are in very high demand in response to such crises. The site visits revealed that area clergy played a major role in helping students adjust at the scene of a crisis, immediately after the crisis and in long-term follow-up. The focus of this plan is to make certain that trained clergy are readily available in an organized fashion at any crisis event in the central Michigan area, with particular emphasis on school violence.

TRAINING

- A. Train at least four clergy and the Mount Pleasant Police Department Chaplain to be part of the Isabella County Crisis Response Team. Training should include instruction in *Crisis Response Defusing and Debriefing Model* by Jeffrey Mitchell. Approved clergy would receive identification badges, which will make them easily identifiable once they arrive at the scene of the crisis.
- B. Communicate all aspects of this plan to existing chaplain programs at area hospitals and all trained clergy.

¹ The term “clergy” is meant to include trained spiritual leaders of all faiths and may include officially recognized lay leaders who are recommended by their faith community.

- C. Expand the existing Mount Pleasant Police Department Faith-Based Liaison by encouraging participation of clergy from spiritual groups not currently involved.
- D. Initiate a Mount Pleasant Schools Faith-Based Liaison to foster supportive relationships between pastors and area school officials should be initiated. Area charter, tribal, and private schools should be included.
- E. Conduct a values-based, upbeat interactive instructional program geared toward middle school and senior high age students in both secular (e.g., Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, schools) and religious youth groups, or an outside organization that specializes in proactive communication program content (e.g. Michigan Department of Community Health's award-winning *Promoting Respectful Communication*). Pro-active advice would be given on how to deal with teenage emotional struggles, as well as what to do in the event a student believes another student to be on the verge of perpetrating violent behavior.
- F. Develop a feasibility study and initial architectural drawings for a faith-based youth center in the downtown area.

INCIDENT CRISIS PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

Clergy trained in the Jeffrey Mitchell Model and the Mount Pleasant Police Department Chaplain should be contacted to provide needed services.

POST-INCIDENT FOLLOW-UP PHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. The Mount Pleasant Police Department Chaplain should plan a combined community-wide memorial service in coordination with families of victims, area clergy directly affected by the crisis, school and law enforcement officials, media, and mental health representatives.

- B. Follow-up counseling should be provided to individuals on an as-needed or as-requested basis.
- C. All clergy who were active in the crisis should have a 72-hour debriefing session.