

From the Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA*

The War in Iran: Supporting Students in Our Schools

As with any major world event, students will differ in how they understand and react to the war in Iran. Some may pay little attention, while others may follow developments closely or have direct family or cultural ties to the region.

The reality is that the conflict will result in loss of life and significant hardship. Some students may have relatives or friends in harm's way, and many will experience distress simply from watching events unfold.

Should school staff talk with students about what is happening?

Ignoring the situation is not a realistic or helpful option. Avoidance can heighten anxiety for some students and signal that their worries are not welcome. At a minimum, staff should acknowledge that the conflict may be affecting students in different ways and that support is available. Students need to know they can ask for help.

Feeling connected to caring adults is essential for all young people—and especially crucial during times of crisis. School personnel should proactively reach out to any student who seems impacted, offering understanding, reassurance, and support.

The Critical Role of Support Staff

Support staff are invaluable in moments like these. They can:

- Develop thoughtful ways to check in with students—individually or through broader classroom strategies.
- Create safe, judgment free, culturally sensitive spaces for discussion and emotional processing.
- Facilitate academic or other school accommodations when a student's focus or functioning is affected.
- Help prevent conflicts among students who may hold different political perspectives about the war.
- Provide guidance to families on how they can support their children at home and when to reach out to school based support teams.

Should Psychological First Aid be needed, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for PTSD provide online the *Psychological First Aid for Schools Field Operations Guide* and accompanying handouts – <https://www.nctsn.org/content/psychological-first-aid-schoolspfa>

For a quick summary of what the guide offers, see <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/psychfirstaid.pdf>

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