



## Handout 2: Indicators of Toxic Stress

### Emotional

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Hyperarousal (easily startled or triggered)
- Emotional numbness (general lack of feelings)
- Irritability with friends, teachers, and events
- Distrust of others, including adults and peers

### Behavioral

- Increase in activity level
- Withdrawal from others or activities
- Angry outbursts and/or aggression
- Absenteeism
- Avoidance behaviors
- Over- or under-reacting to, for example, bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, and sudden movements
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Recreating the traumatic event in play, conversation, or drawing
- Re-experiencing the trauma during the day
- Increased impulsivity for and risk of substance abuse

### Verbal

- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Increased physical complaints
- Statements and questions about death and dying
- Discomfort with feelings (e.g., expressing troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Repeated discussions about the of event and focus on specific details about what happened

### Academic

- Changes in school performance
- Decreased attention and/or concentration

Adapted from National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee. (2008, October). *Child trauma toolkit for educators*. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

