



EDUCATION and **Climate Emergencies**

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CARE AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SUPPORT

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EDUCATION and Emergencies Climate



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PSYCHOLOGICAL
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1. PRESENTATION

The Legal Amazon covers approximately 60% of Brazil's territory and is home to approximately 29 million people. This region is characterized by geographic, ecological, and sociocultural diversity. It includes major urban centers, remote rural areas, Indigenous and quilombola territories, and traditional communities that preserve ancestral ways of life and knowledge. This complexity poses specific challenges for the formulation and implementation of public policies, particularly in education.

Against the backdrop of the global climate crisis, socioenvironmental emergencies have become more frequent, directly affecting everyday school life. Phenomena such as historic floods, prolonged droughts, heat waves, wildfires that produce toxic smoke, riverbank collapses, and landslides along embankments have already disrupted student attendance and ability to remain in school, weakening their connection to school and compromising the safety of the entire school community.

In this context, it is important to develop frameworks to guide the work of school systems and schools. This booklet was developed to support education leaders in the Legal Amazon by providing context-specific guidelines to help strengthen school resilience, protect school communities, and ensure the right to education in adverse situations.

The climate crisis is already having tangible impacts, and those impacts vary across territories. Preparing education systems to address these impacts means recognizing the Amazon's importance on the global climate agenda and reaffirming a commitment to territorial, social, and environmental justice.

In this context, the Legal Amazon Consortium, through its Education Sectoral Chamber and in partnership with Instituto Unibanco, UNICEF, and Vozes da Educação, presents this guidance booklet. This material brings together concepts and practical guidance on psychosocial care and support in climate emergency situations, with the aim of helping school networks and schools develop thoughtful, coordinated, and context-sensitive responses.

Our goal is to support reflection and the development of strategies that protect schools and safeguard the rights of children and adolescents in times of crisis, while valuing the experiences, knowledge, and strategies already present in these territories.

Happy reading!

2. WHAT IS PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT?

Care refers to the ability to receive and care for others in situations of vulnerability, recognizing their emotional and social needs.

More than a one-time action, it is an approach grounded in listening, respect, and creating a safe environment. It involves recognizing how crises affect people's lives and offering initial support so they feel seen, heard, and, in some way, protected.

Complementarily, **psychosocial support** encompasses a set of actions aimed at promoting emotional well-being, preventing further harm, and mobilizing protection networks. It involves interventions that may take place both in everyday school life, through educational and community-building practices, and in coordination with specialized services.

In education, psychosocial care and support are not **one-time actions, but an integral part of educational management**. They require institutional preparedness, clearly defined roles, and structured protocols. Schools play a central role in this process because they are trusted public spaces for community life and interaction. Education Departments, in turn, must provide guidelines, training, technical support, and intersectoral coordination to ensure these practices are sustained in schools' day-to-day work.

STARTING POINT

Understanding what psychosocial care and support mean is only the first step. The next challenge is to turn these concepts into everyday practices across the school network and in schools.

Psychosocial support takes place at different levels. In everyday school life, it begins with **basic care practices**, such as listening and providing support, which can be carried out by educators, school administrators, and other members of the school community. When carried out intentionally and consistently, these simple actions **promote well-being and help prevent emotional distress**.

In some cases, **specialized care** from mental health and social service professionals is needed. The school's role is to recognize the limits of its work, strengthen community ties, and mobilize the support network whenever needed.

❓ **Schools are a trusted place** for children, adolescents, school staff, and families, including in times of adversity. Therefore, this is where listening, protection, and community-building practices need to be consistently put into action. In the next section, we'll look at how to put these care practices into action in everyday school life, strengthening protection, mental health, community life, and learning in the face of climate emergencies.

3. WHY DISCUSS PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS?

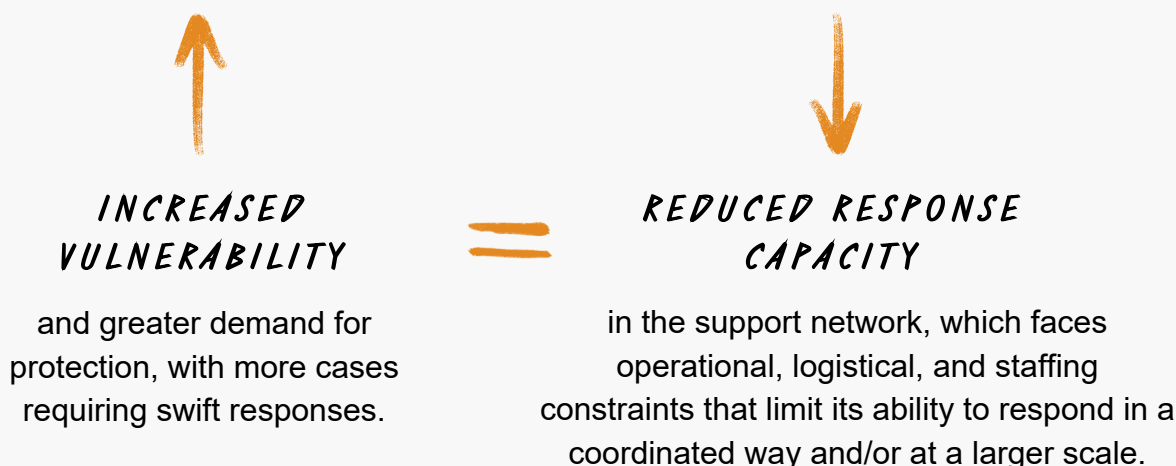
Psychosocial care and support are **important components of risk management and disaster management**. Like the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery actions presented in Booklet 1, these practices strengthen school networks' and schools' ability to protect their communities in the face of climate emergencies.

As we saw earlier, **climate emergencies** affect more than infrastructure: they **directly affect the lives of the people who make up the school community**. In addition to material losses, these experiences can lead to feelings and behaviors such as **fear, anxiety, sadness, isolation, and difficulty concentrating**.

Among children and adolescents, these effects are often even more intense¹, increasing the risk of physical and mental health problems. When these effects go unrecognized and unaddressed, they can jeopardize students' continued participation in school and overall development.

¹ In a 2025 survey conducted by CIESPI/PUC-Rio, 68.5% of the adolescents and young adults interviewed reported feeling anxious, afraid, or insecure about climate change in Brazil, while another 11.5% mentioned emotions such as worry, distress, sadness, anger, and outrage.

In addition, crisis situations increase the school community's exposure to different forms of rights violations while weakening the response capacity of the protection network. In other words, emergencies set two processes in motion:



In this context, psychosocial care and support become strategic components.

According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), **psychosocial support helps individuals and communities heal emotional wounds, rebuild social ties, and resume daily life after an emergency or serious event.** This initial care helps prevent distress from becoming more serious and strengthens community ties.

In education, this means creating spaces for listening, protection, and community life that promote well-being and continuity in education for students, school staff, and families alike. Psychosocial care and support are part of educational management and should be integrated into school network policies, curricula, and schools' political-pedagogical plans.

These practices do not replace specialized health or social services. They are part of ongoing, coordinated care that strengthens relationships, promotes shared responsibility, and mobilizes the support network whenever needed.

Integrating these dimensions into school network and school planning strengthens institutions' capacity to respond to the impacts of emergencies in a coordinated and sensitive way.

NATIONAL POLICY FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE IN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Law No. 14,819 of January 16, 2024, establishes the **National Policy for Psychosocial Care in School Communities**. Its purpose is to integrate and coordinate the fields of education, social assistance, and health in efforts to promote well-being, prevent harm, and provide psychosocial care in schools. Its guidelines include ongoing training for school administrators and education professionals on mental health, and ensuring that the entire school community has access to psychosocial care.

Article 4 of the law emphasizes that implementing this policy is a **shared responsibility** and must be coordinated with the School Health Program (PSE), the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), and the psychosocial care network, under the governance of PSE Intersectoral Working Groups, which include representatives from the health sector and the school community.

Law No. 14,819, of January 16, 2024

4. STRATEGIES FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT

The response of school networks and schools to climate emergencies involves different stages—before, during, and after—which are described in detail in other booklets in this series. In this material, psychosocial care and support actions are organized around complementary strategic areas that span these different stages and focus on the practices and conditions that sustain ongoing care.

SEE BOOKLET 1 – p. 15

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER

The following sections present guidance and examples for each area, which can be adapted to the circumstances and response timelines of each school network or school.

CULTURE OF CARE AND INSTITUTIONAL PREPAREDNESS

- **Integrate psychosocial care** and support into school network guidelines and schools' political-pedagogical plans.
- **Map the local support network.**
- **Create protocols** for referrals.
- **Carry out ongoing preventive actions.**

PSYCHOSOCIAL RESPONSE IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

- **Activate protocols** with the intersectoral network.
- **Provide immediate support** to students and school staff.

COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REBUILDING

- **Reopen schools** with supportive practices in place.
- **Conduct active outreach** to identify students who are not attending school.

INTEGRATE PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE AND SUPPORT INTO SCHOOL NETWORK GUIDELINES AND SCHOOLS' POLITICAL-PEDAGOGICAL PLANS

Why is it important?

When psychosocial care and support are built into school network guidelines and political-pedagogical plans (PPPs), they no longer depend on the initiative of individual teams or administrators. This also helps align schools around a shared vision, strengthening consistency between what the school network proposes and what happens in schools' day-to-day work.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- **Provide ongoing**, on-the-job training for all school network professionals to integrate psychosocial care into the Department of Education's planning tools.
- **Support the Department of Education** in developing support templates and reference materials for schools, including but not limited to:
 - Individualized plans for students experiencing emotional vulnerability; emotional regulation plans;
 - Well-being check-in;
 - Questionnaires for school staff;
- **Integrate** psychosocial care and support into schools' political-pedagogical plans (PPPs).
- **Review each school's Internal Regulations** through a collective, democratic process.

PSYCHOSOCIAL GUIDANCE GUIDE FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

In 2024, the government launched a protocol to strengthen strategies for prevention and care for students and the school community. The document points out that emotional support, dialogue, and active listening can help create safe spaces where students, educators, and family members can interact and share their experiences after a stressful event.

The material is part of the School that Protects Program, which is linked to the National System for Monitoring and Combating Violence in Schools (SNAVE) and was established in accordance with Law No. 14,643/2023. Although it is intended to guide school systems in cases of attacks involving extreme violence, some of its actions can be adapted to climate emergencies, as they address intense reactions such as fear, guilt, and grief.

MAPPING THE SUPPORT NETWORK IN THE TERRITORY

Why is it important?

By mapping and familiarizing themselves with local support services, schools learn whom to contact and how to respond in different situations. This helps school administrators and teachers act with greater confidence, strengthening the school's response capacity and avoiding ad hoc decisions during a crisis. More than a one-time coordination effort, mapping also strengthens institutional ties between schools and public services, fostering shared responsibility and a culture of care that extends beyond school walls.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- **Help schools identify** their local support network.
- **Guide schools on how to coordinate** with the intersectoral support network.
- **Provide letter templates** to help schools establish structured communication with members of the support network.
- **Establish communication and referral protocols** between schools and protection services.
- **Prepare a document listing contact** information and designated contacts for each service—the “Local Support Network Map”—for quick reference in emergencies.

WHAT SUPPORT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY?

In addition to schools, the main services in the support network include:

- **Family Health Units** (USFs),
- **Primary Health Care Units** (UBSs),
- **Psychosocial Care Centers** (CAPS),
- **Child and Adolescent Psychosocial Care Center** (CAPS-ij),
- **Social Assistance Reference Centers** (CRAS),
- **Guardianship Councils**,
- **Civil Defense**,
- **Fire Department**, and
- **Civil society organizations**.

STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATING WITH THE SUPPORT NETWORK

Building strong partnerships between schools and the support network requires planning and continuity. This process can be organized in three steps:



STEP 1: IDENTIFY AGENCIES AND SERVICES AVAILABLE NEAR THE SCHOOL

- Gather information from the municipal government;
- Observe the area around the school;
- Talk with the school community to gather information;
- Keep the phone numbers and addresses of the listed services on file.



STEP 2: GET TO KNOW THE AGENCIES AND SERVICES AND UNDERSTAND

- Their role in the support network;
- Their hours of operation;
- Whether they have the staff needed to meet the school's needs;
- How to contact the agency;
- Whether there is specific guidance for addressing schools' needs.



STEP 3: ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE SELECTED AGENCIES

- Organize a schedule of coordination meetings;
- Agree on roles, responsibilities, and procedures;
- Schedule follow-up meetings to review outcomes and reassess the partnerships.

CREATE PROTOCOLS FOR REFERRALS

Why is it important?

Having referral protocols between schools and the support network is important to ensure that situations involving vulnerability, risk, or emotional distress receive timely, appropriate, and coordinated responses. When there is a defined process, care and protection are no longer isolated actions; they become part of a collective, coordinated strategy.

- Criar formulários ou registros padronizados para documentar situações e encaminhamentos, como atas de reunião.
- Promover reuniões de integração entre atores-chaves dos protocolos escolares.
- Revisar os protocolos escolares periodicamente.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Develop guidelines for Regional Education Offices to work with schools on referral protocols for situations involving risk, in coordination with the support network.
- Provide technical assistance in developing school protocols.
- Guide schools and technical teams in understanding the laws and regulations that apply to situations involving violence, rights violations, and mental distress, including Law No. 13,431/2017 and other local or national rules on intersectoral referral processes.
- Recommend that schools identify existing local referral processes and protocols, coordinate with them, and become part of municipal and regional protection systems. Provide training for school teams.
- Develop intersectoral referral processes involving the Department of Education,
- Regional Education Office, school, and support network.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A REFERRAL PROTOCOL

Protocols should clearly and systematically specify:

1. Which services to contact;
2. When to make the referral;
3. How to make contact or submit a notification;
4. Who the designated contacts are at the school and within the support network;
5. Which specific procedures apply to each type of situation identified.

CARRY OUT ONGOING PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Why is it important?

Providing psychosocial care and support requires raising awareness and carrying out ongoing preventive actions. In education, this means creating a stable, supportive, and nonjudgmental environment where students, school staff, and families feel safe expressing their feelings and sharing their vulnerabilities. Awareness-raising and prevention also involve watching for signs of stress and emotional distress during emergencies. When recognized early, these signs allow for timely, thoughtful, and compassionate responses that strengthen relationships and help prevent distress from worsening.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Provide technical and emotional support to school teams.
- Strengthen institutional support services for schools.
- Provide regular training on mental health, psychosocial care, and support.
- Integrate care and support activities into the school calendar.
- Run educational campaigns on psychosocial care and support.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS?

A trauma-informed school recognizes that adverse experiences can affect how people behave, learn, and relate to others. Based on this understanding, it fosters a culture of empathy and care, creating conditions that promote:

- **Senso de segurança** no ambiente escolar;
- **Previsibilidade** nas rotinas e nas relações;
- **Confiança mútua**, para que crianças e adultos se sintam respeitadas e protegidas.

This means fostering caring relationships, valuing listening, and avoiding practices that could retraumatize people or reinforce feelings of insecurity, fear, and helplessness.



COMMUNITY-BUILDING WEEK: STRENGTHENING A CULTURE OF CARE

For psychosocial care and support to be effective during emergencies, these actions need to be institutionalized and embedded in the culture of the school network and schools. To help strengthen this culture, the Ministry of Education recommends holding a School Community-Building Week—an annual or semiannual period dedicated to reflection, community-building, and practices that promote the well-being of the school community.

The School Community-Building Week may include:

- Team-building activities,
- Topic-based workshops,
- Discussion groups,
- Arts and sports activities,
- Talks on mental health,
- Initiatives that recognize and celebrate the school community.

These activities can be documented and shared with the community and school network, inspiring other schools and spreading a culture of care.

 **STUDENT LEADERSHIP:** Students can play a leading role in this process by helping plan and carry out activities, proposing ideas, engaging their peers, and helping with organization. This participation strengthens students' sense of belonging and the school community's shared commitment to caring for one another.



ACTIVATE PROTOCOLS WITH THE INTERSECTORAL NETWORK

Why is it important?

In a crisis, it is essential for schools to recognize that they are not alone.

The school is better able to provide emotional care, psychosocial support, and protection when it works in partnership with the local intersectoral support network.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Help schools develop referral protocols for the intersectoral network.
- Designate school staff members to serve as direct contacts for intersectoral support services.
- Ensure that all school staff are familiar with the established protocols.
- Hold coordination meetings with the network to review and update the protocols.

PROVIDE IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Why is it important?

Providing immediate support means offering care and taking action to ensure that people's most urgent basic needs are met and that they do not feel alone. In the first few days after a climate emergency, students, school staff, and families may experience intense emotional reactions and have a range of needs.

At such times, alongside a swift and coordinated response, it is essential for schools to listen, provide care, and be present. Providing immediate support at school can help mitigate the emotional impact, restore a sense of safety, and strengthen the resilience of the school community.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Designate staff members to provide care and immediate support during emergencies.
- Establish a designated team to coordinate support efforts at the school.
- Prepare safe spaces at school for listening sessions.
- Contact intersectoral services in accordance with the established referral protocols.
- Maintain transparent, empathetic, and ongoing communication with the school community, ensuring that students, families, and staff are informed about the actions underway, available support channels, and care measures in place.
- Use a range of communication channels, such as meetings, bulletin boards, social media, and informational notes, to ensure that everyone has access to information and feels part of the recovery process

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID IN SCHOOLS (PFA-S)

Imagine that, shortly after a climate emergency, the school reopens its doors to students, families, and educators who are still shaken by what they have experienced. Some cry easily, others avoid talking about what happened, some feel worried and exhausted, and others withdraw. In these situations, Psychological First Aid in Schools (PFA-S) offers a supportive, structured way to respond.

PFA-S is a set of practical, brief, and empathetic actions that educators can take in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. Its goal is to reduce initial distress, restore a sense of safety, promote well-being, and strengthen supportive, trusting relationships within the school community.

These actions are guided by principles such as:

- **Reach out and provide care:** initiate or respond to contact with students and educators in a compassionate, respectful, and helpful way.
- **Safety and comfort:** Provide safe, stable spaces that offer physical and emotional comfort.
- **Stabilization:** Help students and educators who are emotionally overwhelmed or disoriented feel calmer and find their bearings;
- **Understanding the needs:** Identify immediate needs, gather information about them, and address them;
- **Practical support:** Offer practical support or guidance to students and educators to help meet their immediate needs;
- **Connect with the support network:** Help students and educators connect with their own support networks, such as family members, friends, and community resources;
- **Information about reactions and coping:** Provide information about stress reactions and coping strategies to help reduce distress and broaden students' and educators' ways of adapting to the situation.
- **Referral to specialized services** - Contact support network services and connect students and educators with them when needed.

It is important to remember that PFA-S does not replace specialized mental health care. Its role is to provide initial emotional care and identify those who need additional support.

REOPEN SCHOOLS WITH SUPPORTIVE PRACTICES IN PLACE

Why is it important?

Reopening schools after a climate emergency marks a symbolic and decisive step toward restoring community life.

Every student, family, and school staff member should be welcomed with respect, attention, and sensitivity so that the school can once again serve as a place of safety and belonging.

For students, care practices help rebuild relationships, foster emotional safety, and support a return to learning routines. This is also a critical time for school staff: they are not only providing care but need care themselves. Ongoing exposure to people's accounts, distress, and emotional needs can have a profound impact, affecting school staff's ability to provide care.

Therefore, during emergencies, school networks and schools should plan reopening intentionally, coordinating efforts to support both students and school staff. This includes creating institutional spaces where school staff can be heard and supported, recognizing the emotional impact they have experienced, valuing teachers' work, and ensuring that schools can provide care without placing the burden on individuals working alone.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF COMPASSION FATIGUE?

After a climate emergency, educators are often deeply involved in listening to, caring for, and supporting the community. At the same time, they are also dealing with the emotional impact on themselves. This ongoing effort can lead to compassion fatigue, a state of physical, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion that arises when those providing care have no time or space to care for themselves.

Warning signs:

- Persistent feelings of tiredness or exhaustion;
- Irritability, impatience, or emotional detachment;
- Difficulty concentrating; and,
- Over time, reduced empathy and ability to listen.

How to prevent and address it:

- Create safe spaces for listening and emotional support for school teams;
- Distribute responsibilities to avoid placing too much of the burden on a few people;
- Promote institutional self-care through breaks, mutual support, and recognition of personal limits;
- Make staff well-being a core part of care strategies.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Provide guidance and reference materials on care practices; include a School Community-Building Week in the activity calendar, with activities that promote community-building, connection, and the rebuilding of relationships;
- Plan cooperative activities for students and educators;
- Ensure that school staff have access to spaces for listening and emotional support.
- Maintain coordinated action across the network, ensuring ongoing collaboration among the school, the intersectoral support network, and the school community, especially in the post-crisis period. Situations experienced during the emergency may become more apparent when in-person contact resumes, requiring attention and coordinated responses.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

After an emergency, reorganizing the school environment can be a symbolic gesture that marks a new beginning. Small changes can make the reopening feel like more than a simple return to routine and show care and consideration for the community.

During this period, the focus should be on care and community-building before academic activities fully resume. Creating a safe, supportive environment helps rebuild relationships and promote everyone's emotional well-being.

Whenever possible, consider rearranging spaces or refreshing the visual environment so the school reflects this moment of new beginnings. One simple step is to put up welcoming and encouraging messages on bulletin boards and posters, created by students and school staff before or shortly after classes resume.

It is also important to share information about local support and protection services, including up-to-date contact details and hours of operation, especially for services for women and girls.

CONDUCT ACTIVE OUTREACH TO REENGAGE STUDENTS

Why is it important?

During climate emergencies, many students may become disconnected from school for various reasons, including forced displacement, difficulty accessing school, staying in temporary shelters, loss of documents, or profound emotional impacts. In this context, active outreach is an essential strategy for preventing students from dropping out. It involves locating students who have stopped attending school, understanding why they are absent, and coordinating efforts to help them return.

Operational guidance for school networks and schools:

- Develop strategies for sharing data among the departments responsible for protecting the rights of children and adolescents, enabling information to be cross-referenced when necessary.
- Develop an active outreach plan for emergencies that defines responsibilities, timelines, and contact strategies.
- Establish multiple ways to make contact, such as phone calls, messages, home visits when safe, and coordination with local community leaders.
- Coordinate community campaigns that highlight the importance of school and returning to classes.

- Monitor students' attendance even after they return to school to prevent further dropouts.
- Evaluate and adjust active outreach strategies based on the context and observed results.

TIP

UNICEF and UNDIME, in partnership with Conasems and Congemas, offer a free platform to help school networks and schools identify, document, and track children and adolescents who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. In addition to technology tools, the initiative provides training materials, operational guides, and outreach campaigns for use by school administrators and staff.

To learn more visit:

<https://buscaativaescolar.org.br>

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This booklet has invited readers to see the school as a space for support and collective rebuilding. We discussed what psychosocial care and support mean during climate emergencies and how these aspects shape everyday school life.

Throughout the chapters, we reinforce that:

- /// Psychosocial care and support are central to the school's protective role during crises;
- /// The emotional well-being of students, school staff, and families is one of the essential factors in the school community's recovery and return to normalcy.
- /// Coordination with the intersectoral network strengthens the school's response capacity;
- /// Preparing before, responding during, and providing support after a climate emergency requires shared responsibility between the school and the intrasectoral and intersectoral networks.

Recognizing and valuing these aspects in schools is essential to putting the actions presented into practice and strengthening a culture of care, listening, and empathy as core values of the school environment.

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