

Death of Student or Staff Member		
SCHOOL RESPONSE		CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE
<p>1) If death occurs at school:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call 9-1-1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call District Emergency Hotline</p>	<p>1) If death occurs away from school:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Contact Principal</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call District Emergency Hotline</p>	<p>1) Hotline guide:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call 9-1-1, if death occurs at school site</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call Superintendent:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p>
<p>2) Principal or designee:</p> <p>Appoint someone to meet emergency personnel and ensure access to site. Secure perimeter around the death scene; make note of all persons who had access within perimeter prior to police arrival.</p> <p>Do NOT allow any potential evidence to be removed or disturbed.</p>	<p>2) Principal:</p> <p>Explain need to verify the information, then call law enforcement to verify</p>	<p>2) Superintendent:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) Calls the Cabinet/Crisis Response Team.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">PIO: Bus.Svcs.: HR: Stu.Achvmnt.: Instruc. Svcs.:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) The superintendent is vital to the implementation of the sudden death response plan.</p> <p>First, the superintendent needs to publicly show support for the concept of school intervention in crises such as the sudden death of a school community member.</p> <p>Second, the superintendent needs to respond quickly to the requests of the building principal in which the deceased was a member. (see Appendix D)</p>
<p>3) Principal:</p> <p>Contact parents, spouse, or next of kin</p> <p>Notify school crisis Team (lead counselor) and assess the expected degree of response from school community. Assess situation and adjust size of crisis team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Immediately go to Appendix A</u> <p>Establish meeting place outside of crisis area to brief.</p>	<p>3) Principal:</p> <p>Notify school crisis Team (lead counselor) and assess the expected degree of response from school community. Assess situation and adjust size of crisis team.</p> <p>Activate the pre-arranged phone tree to notify staff of early morning mandatory meeting. Request that Crisis Mngmt. Team meet with principal thirty minutes prior to staff meeting*</p> <p><i>If the crisis will not greatly impact the school community, go to step #4.</i></p> <p>*Appendix A</p>	<p>3) PIO</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Gather information, contact media, prepare communications for parents with school principal, superintendent.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">HR: Call the District Crisis Response Counseling Team. Work closely with school principal to provide potential services needed.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Bus.Svcs: Call: Safety Coordinator: Director of Facilities: Director of Transp.:</p>

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<p>4) Principal</p> <p>Prepare an announcement to be read over the P.A. system to the students.*</p> <p>* Appendix B</p>	<p>4) Principal</p> <p>Prepare an announcement to be read over the P.A. system to the students.*</p> <p>* Appendix B</p>	<p>4) Superintendent:</p> <p>Contact School Board members</p>	
<p>5) Principal</p> <p>Arrange fifteen-minute after-school meeting with entire school staff. Review day's activities and seek names of any student faculty thinks needs additional emotional first aid. After meeting with faculty, meet with Crisis Management Team. Review day's activities and plan for the next day.</p>	<p>5) Principal</p> <p>Arrange fifteen-minute after-school meeting with entire school staff. Review day's activities and seek names of any student faculty thinks needs additional emotional first aid. After meeting with faculty, meet with Crisis Management Team. Review day's activities and plan for the next day.</p>	<p>5) Superintendent:</p> <p>Monitor intervention process.</p>	
<p>6) Principal:</p> <p>On the day following the funeral, the principal should make the following closure statement to all students and faculty: (This is done the day following the funeral because many of the deceased student's closest friends will not return to school the day of the funeral.)</p> <p><i>May I have your attention, please? I wish to thank all of the students and faculty for the support you have shown each other during the past few days. The example you have shown is a positive and healthy one and provides us the opportunity to work toward strengthening our relationships with each other. Guidance staff remains available if you should wish to talk with a counselor. (Any additional comments from the family that have been passed on to the principal might be shared at this point.)</i></p>			
<p>7) Principal</p> <p>Identify long-term effects and follow-up of recovery. I.e. staff/students/student groups actually affected, crisis debriefing, counseling.</p>			

APPENDIX A.

I. Principal's first steps

- a) Designate the CMT - Crisis Management Team Leader (counselor) as the person responsible for orchestrating the emotional first aid activities for the next few days. (Appendix E)
- b) Discuss with CMT school wide safety plan...open/closed campus consideration.
- c) Direct a CMT member to immediately remove contents from deceased student's locker. Hopefully, this can be accomplished discreetly and prior to students returning to school. The personal contents belong to the parents and removal to the principal's office will ensure they are properly presented to the parents.
- d) Direct a staff member to pull the deceased student's cumulative folder to determine what other schools the deceased student might have attended.
- e) The principal should call the other schools and inform them of the events that have occurred, particularly, if younger siblings are in those other schools. Secondly, the principal should notify the central administration office of the circumstances of the day. It is also helpful, at this point, to assign responsibility to someone to pull the student's name off any mailing lists that would be sent from the school and central administration office.
- f) Direct CMT member to collect funeral arrangement information and to prepare details for student/faculty attendance at the visitation and funeral. When details are final, an announcement can be made to staff and students.
- g) Prepare a letter to be sent to all parents regarding the death of a school community member (Please see Appendix C for sample letters.)
- h) Designate CMT member to notify peer helpers before start of day and outline clear expectations. Assure they are aware of their staff support.
- i) Designate CMT member to provide *substitute's for staff directly involved. *Substitutes are to be briefed by the Crisis Team Leader (counselor) before starting shift.

Note: Designate one administrative assistant who will know how to reach the principal throughout the day so the principal can respond to any emergencies/administrative situations which may develop.

APPENDIX B

I. Principal or designee

- a) Identify a “Speaker” or “Voice of the School”. The presence of a strong, caring, and supportive authority figure (i.e., the principal) sharing information during this stressful time is important. *(In elementary schools, it is equally important for the classroom teacher to be a strong, caring, and supportive presence since the teacher will be looked upon by the students to provide stability during this crisis period.)*

One example of an announcement is the following:

Students, may I have your attention, please. Last night (student's name) from our junior class died. This morning the faculty met to develop a plan to help all of us cope with this sad event. There will be special support assistance available for any student who feels they need this service. Today, counselors will be available in (given location) all day. Pause. I would like all of us to reflect for a minute in memory of (student's first name). Pause. Thank you for your attention.

- b) **In the case of a suicidal death:** It is important in dealing with a suicidal death to be prudent in your responses:
- Do not glorify the act of suicide.
 - **Do not announce that the death was by suicide when making general public statements. Coroner's medical findings can be legally contested and frequently are in cases of suicide. School personnel should allow the discussion of suicide as the students talk about the death, however, it is not essential that school personnel confirm the death was by suicide. As the students are discussing the nature of the death (which they will do), school personnel should take the opportunity to discuss the subject of suicide and how the students might cope with stress, personal frustration, disappointment, and other severe hardships.**
 - Recognize the tragedy of the event and acknowledge the varied feelings of those grieving.
 - Memorials should be directed toward symbols of coping and living (e.g., donations to a crisis hotline, a blood drive). Do not dedicate an athletic event or other school activity to the deceased student; establishing a permanent memorial (plaque, tree, dedicating the year book) can become a constant invitation to consider suicide.
 - A return to "normal" school functioning should be encouraged as soon as possible, so as, to regain a sense of stability and purpose in the lives of those grieving.

APPENDIX C

Sample Letters To Parents

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian:

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death of Joe Doe, a sophomore in our school. John died from injuries suffered in a car accident which occurred last evening (do not specify reason if death by suicide or causes which are unknown, etc.).

The funeral will be held at _____ (Funeral Home or Church) at _____ a.m./p.m.
Visitation will be held at _____ (Funeral Home) during the hours of _____ to _____. Parents are encouraged to attend the funeral with their child. (Note: Send a letter home to parents even if you do not know the details of the funeral arrangements.)

Students will have varied reactions to the death of a peer. Any reaction is normal in the grief process and can range from withdrawal, to crying and anger. I encourage you to openly discuss with your child their reactions and feelings regarding the death of Joe.

Special counseling services have been made available to students today and will continue to be available throughout the week and longer, if needed.

If you think your child needs additional counseling support, please do not hesitate to contact the _____ (School Counseling Office) at _____ (phone number).

Sincerely,

Principal and Staff

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Dear Parent:

As you may be aware, our school district has experienced a death of a (student/faculty member) that has affected us deeply.

The students and staff will react in different ways to the death of one of our school community members. We all should expect and try to understand that there will be a variety of emotions and responses to what has occurred. The most important thing we can do is to be supportive and encourage an open expression of feelings. At the school, we have implemented a plan for responding to this tragic event focused on helping our students and their families get back to regular learning and every day activities as soon as possible. This plan has evolved from the district's experience with death in the past and the advice of mental health professionals from the community. Our teachers and counselors have been briefed on our plans and have received guidelines for discussing about death and reactions to it. There will be district personnel available to students who need special attention and support. There is also help available from the community. We will try to maintain as normal a routine and structure as the situation and people allow, and we encourage you to do the same. If you feel that your child or family needs some assistance, please contact us, and we will do everything we can to help you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school at (give preferred phone numbers). We know you will join us in our concern and sympathy for the family.

Sincerely,

Principal and Staff

APPENDIX D

I. Superintendent's Role

Step One

Have building principal in which a school community member has died, update and inform you as soon as possible. (Ask what request building principal may have in order to best be able to respond to this traumatic event.) Inform, as necessary, other building principals and district staff (including bus drivers).

Step Two

Brief secretary in handling calls and requests for information.

Step Three

Act as a contact person to the media or designate a person to act in that capacity.

Step Four

When appropriate, extend condolences to the immediate family and provide appropriate representation at services.

APPENDIX E

I. CMT LEADER (Lead Counselor)

- a. You will also serve as the “hub” of information and will direct the crisis counseling team’s daily activities. You will also identify a support center area in the building where students may come for support and counseling. This area should be close to the guidance office and/or the main office to facilitate communications between guidance and administrative staff.
- b. Identify and have contact with school staff acquainted with the deceased student and possibly in need of extra support (e.g., a teacher who has had a special relationship with the student, had the student in class, or has a sibling in class.)
 - a. Provide "in-class" assistance when requested by teachers.
 - b. Start a master list of "high-risk" students in need of extra support. These include: close friends of the deceased student, relatives, students in the same activities or clubs as the deceased student, neighbors of the deceased student, and students with other stressors.

Crisis counseling team (CCT) should meet briefly with all identified "high-risk" students and with any students who are referred. Decide what, if any, intervention is appropriate (triage). Options could include:

- Individual grief counseling.
- Grief group. The grief group should automatically be formed the first day, and students should stream in and out during the day. The focus is on memories of the deceased student and grief work. Typically, students will be in grief group for only one or two periods and not all day. For students requiring "excessive" intervention, parents need to be informed and directed to appropriate community resources.
- Referral to community mental health center or other appropriate community resource.
- Identify students who are absent during the day who may be "high risk," and inform parents of your concern for them. This may include non-school attendees and those students who may have dropped out or transferred.

For students who request to leave school because of their grief reaction:

- A. Release students to parents or an adult designated by the parent. Encourage the parent not to leave the child alone during the day.
- B. Provide parents with guidelines on how to manage grief and a brief listing of community resources.
- C. Let the student know that you expect him/her to return to school the next day.
- D. Check to see if the students return the next day and briefly check with them to see how they are doing. If a student has not returned, contact their parents to check to see how he/she is doing. Offer your assistance to the parents and/or student.

At the end of the first day, the Crisis Management Team should meet to update themselves and review the list of "high-risk" students. Throughout the week, review the status of "high-risk" students with the master

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list. Determine which students may need to be referred to community mental health services based on their previous history and immediate need.

II. CMT LEADER (Lead Counselor)

- a. Discuss the role the CCT will provide in the funeral or memorial service. After the funeral, assist the building staff in moving toward a "normal" atmosphere as soon as possible. (An announcement will be made by the principal regarding continued availability of guidance staff.)
- b. Carefully review with the principal and other CCT members the memorial requests for the deceased student.
- c. In a week or two following the crisis, meet as a team and discuss the response activities including those procedures which may need to be modified.