Appendix I

Sample Agenda for Parent/Guardian/Community Meeting

Overview

Meetings with parents can provide a helpful forum for disseminating information and answering questions. The Crisis Response Team coordinator and all other Crisis Response Team members, the superintendent, and the school principal should attend parent/community meetings. Representatives from community resources, such as mental health providers, county crisis services, and clergy, may also be invited to be present and provide information.

Be sure to consider the racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds of students and parents:

- Address the language needs of parents who speak little or no English.
- Determine if there is any content or format that would feel uncomfortable or inappropriate for those who might attend the meeting. For example, if parents of the deceased are in attendance, how might discussing this in a group setting impact their experience?

Large, open-microphone meetings are not advised, since they can result in an unwieldy, unproductive session focused on scapegoating and blaming.

Ideally, the meeting is broken up into two parts:

- PART I: Presented by school staff, the focus should be on dissemination of general information to parents, without opening the meeting to discussion; and
- PART II: Have parents meet in small groups with trained crisis counselors for questions and discussion.

Part 1 of 2: General Information (45 - 60 minutes)

Crisis Response Team Coordinator, School Superintendent, or Principal:

- Welcomes all and expresses sympathy;
- Introduces the school administration and members of the Crisis Response Team;
- Expresses confidence in the staff's ability to assist the students;
- Encourages parent and school collaboration during this difficult time;
- Reassures attendees that there will be an opportunity for questions and discussion;
- States school's goal of treating this death as it would any other death, regardless of the cause, while remaining aware that adolescents can be vulnerable to the risk of imitative suicidal behavior; and
- States the importance of balancing the need to grieve with not inadvertently oversimplifying, glamorizing, or romanticizing suicide.

Taken from:
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, & Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2018). "After a suicide: A toolkit for schools" (2nd ed.). Waltham, MA: Education Development Center.

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Appendix I

Sample Agenda for Parent/Guardian/Community Meeting

(continued)

Part 1 of 2: General Information (continued)

Principal or Crisis Response Team Coordinator:

- Outlines the purpose and structure of the meeting;
- Verifies the death;
- Discourages the spread of rumors;
- Informs parents about the school's responsive activities, including media requests; and
- Informs parents about the student release policy for funerals.

Crisis Response Team Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, or other Designated Crisis Team Member:

- Shares how the school will help students cope;
- Shares that more information about bereavement after suicide is available on AFSP's Website. See: https://afsp.org/;
- Shares the handouts "Tips for Talking about Suicide" and "Facts about Suicide in Adolescents (Appendix P | PAGES 85-88 and Q | PAGE 89);
- Explains risk factors and warning signs;
- Reminds parents that help is available for any student who may be struggling with mental health issues, or suicidal thoughts or behaviors; and
- Provides contact information for mental health resources at the school and in the community, such as:
  - School mental health professionals;
  - Community mental health agencies;
  - Emergency psychiatric screening centers;
  - Children's mobile response program; and
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Part 2 of 2: Small Group Meeting (1 Hour)

- Ideally, each small group should have no more than 8 to 10 parents;
- Each group should be facilitated by at least two trained mental health professionals;
- Support staff should be available to direct parents to meeting rooms, distribute handouts, and make water and tissues available; and
- If possible, additional mental health professionals should be available to meet with parents individually as needed.

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Appendix I

Sample Agenda for Parent/Guardian/Community Meeting

(continued)

Some Additional Considerations

- Since some parents may arrive with young children, provide onsite childcare;
- Some students may accompany their parents so provide separate discussion groups for them;
- Media should not be permitted access to the small groups. Arrange for the media spokesperson to meet with any media at a separate location away from parents and children; and
- In some cases (e.g., if the death has received a great deal of sensationalized media attention), security may be necessary to assist with traffic flow, media and crowd control.

Sample Parent/Guardian/Community Meetings

- Several districts in Marin County provided opportunities for parents/guardians to engage in a Community Conversation about Suicide Prevention. These virtual conversations included students and experts in the field of suicide prevention. Below are two examples of the details surrounding these events.



