Coffeyville School District
USD 445

Crisis Manual

Approved on:

A. General Overview

B. Crisis Response Team

C. Death, Dying and Loss

D. Suicide

E. Physical Disaster

A. General Overview

General Crisis Intervention Checklist:

To be considered (if applicable) any time a crisis occurs that warrants a response by the Building and/or District Crisis Response Team

Immediate Considerations:

- ❒ Call Police: 911 or Dispatch at 620-252-6160.
- ❒ Verify the facts regarding the crisis.
- ❒ Notify appropriate Building Administration.
- ❒ Contact Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent if necessary (252-6400).
- ❒ Contact Public Relations Coordinator at BOE.
- ❒ Contact Crisis Management Coordinator.
- ❒ Contact Student Support Services Coordinator.
- ❒ Assemble the District Crisis Response Team.
- ❒ Building administration convene emergency Staff Meeting to inform and debrief.
- ❒ Prepare statement or announcement with guidance from District Crisis Team.
- ❒ Contact School Clinic and Nurses at both sites. Notify CRMC if need be.

Secondary Considerations:

- ❒ Distribute Community Resources Lists as needed to faculty, students, families.
- ❒ Identify students, staff, and/or parents most likely to be affected by the crisis.
- ❒ Assess need for additional community resources.
- ❒ Assign trained staff to specific duties as dictated by the nature of the crisis.
- ❒ Find appropriate replacement(s) for absent/affected staff.
- ❒ Provide opportunity for faculty / staff to discuss reactions and feelings.
- ❒ Contact Greenbush for Crisis Response Support

A. General Overview

Section A

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual provides strategies for addressing crisis intervention within schools in the Coffeyville Public Schools Unified School District 445.

- The primary purpose of "crisis response" is to help students and staff cope with painful emotions and feelings resulting from a community or school related crisis.

- The second purpose is to assist schools to return to normal routines as quickly and calmly as possible following a major disruption of the educational process.

DEFINITIONS

SCHOOL CRISIS: A reaction to, or perception of, a situation or event which causes psychological trauma to students and/or staff and requires immediate action because of its disruption or potential disruption to the educational process. A crisis may impact a small group of students in one classroom or the entire school community. Possible types of crises: death of a student or staff member, acts of violence, suicide attempt or completion, natural disaster such as earthquake, fire, toxic spill, automobile or other accident.

CRISIS RESPONSE: Intervention designed to restore a school and community to baseline functioning and to help prevent or minimize damaging psychological results following a disaster or crisis situation. It is important that during the immediate hours and days following a crisis, students and staff are helped to return to previous emotional equilibrium. If left unchecked, some emotional responses may become internalized and exhibit themselves in unusual behaviors.

CHECKLIST FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION

Steps to Consider Before a Site Crisis Response

Following a crisis, students and staff require recognition of, and help with their emotional needs. If emotional responses are not supported appropriately during the initial stages of a crisis, feelings may be internalized. This may result in an inability to concentrate, aggressive or reckless behaviors, or physical symptoms. A school site may attempt to do "business as usual" following a crisis. However, without addressing the crisis directly, students and staff will find it difficult to focus on the process of teaching and learning.

Below are considerations to prepare a school site before a crisis occurs. Review and revise the following information annually as an aspect of the site Safe School Plan.

❒ Identify a Crisis Response Team. A Crisis Response Team (CRT) should be identified each year (see Section B, Crisis Response Team)
❒ Ensure that appropriate incident report forms are accessible in case the crisis involves sexual harassment, sexual assault, or a hate crime. Submit forms to District Office
❒ Schedule a meeting at least once each semester to review the site's crisis response plans and include community partners.
❒ Inform staff annually of the site's crisis response plan; introduce the CRT.
❒ Establish a working relationship with community-based organizations. Maintain a list of resources to be kept in the Resource chapter of this manual.
❒ Set up telephone trees to contact staff and/or families. ❒ Identify space where service providers assisting in the crisis can see students for small group counseling. ❒ Review, revise and print forms, classroom debrief materials and other materials that might be needed by CRT and staff.
❒ Review/develop relevant educational resources regarding crisis, grief, loss, etc.
❒ Develop a plan for emergency coverage of duties for CRT members.
❒ Establish a code to alert staff to implement prearranged procedures, e.g. lock down.
❒ Hold a mock crisis response.
❒ Establish procedures for annual crisis response professional development of new staff and update/review for all staff.
❒ Coordinate and inform relevant programs on site, including After School Program, Boys & Girls Club, etc.

CHECKLIST FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN

Steps to Consider In the Event of a Crisis

It is essential to handle a crisis in a rapid and sensitive manner. No single plan or intervention will fit all situations and meet all individual needs. To enable a site to be prepared in advance of a crisis, sites should develop a general plan that can be adjusted to create an appropriate response to the crisis.

Particular actions need to occur to respond comprehensively to a crisis; the order of responses will vary according to the crisis and the site needs.

Reference the General Crisis Intervention Checklist at the beginning of this manual. The points below expand upon the basic items on that checklist.

❒ Assemble the CRT and relieve members of routine responsibilities.
❒ Notify Central Office and, thereafter, keep it informed about steps being taken.
❒ Contact parent(s) or family member of involved persons to obtain: • accurate information, • what information can be shared; • information regarding memorial services, etc., if there has been a death.
❒ Complete appropriate incident reports if the crisis involves sexual harassment, sexual assault, or a hate crime. Submit forms to District Office.
❒ Notify other sites if involved student or staff have relatives attending other schools. Coordinate activities with them if appropriate.
❒ Identify close friends/associates at the site who might be most impacted.
❒ Make an initial determination of the capacity of site staff to respond to the crisis. Contact the Nurse of the Day, School Health Programs Department (242-2615) if technical assistance or on site support is needed.
❒ Determine how to inform, in person, staff members most closely associated with the crisis and provide relief if they are unable to continue with their duties. Provide the support they need to resume responsibilities.
❒ Determine how to support students closest to the crisis: classmates, sports team, group or club.
❒ Determine how to inform the rest of the staff and students. Never announce a crisis over the intercom system. (This procedure may depersonalize the incident and create chaos.)
❒ Provide whatever crisis response debriefing is necessary for students and staff. See “Supporting Activities” chapter for additional information.
❒ Notify parents/caregivers in writing of the crisis so they can support their children. Telephone the parents/caregivers of any students severely impacted by the crisis, such as witnesses, close friends.
❒ Use a system to identify and refer students and/or staff who may need additional emotional support.
❒ Determine what additional support is needed to bring closure to the crisis, such as attending the funeral or memorial service, writing letters, planning a site memorial activity.
❒ Meet daily, and more frequently, if necessary, as a CRT to review plans, provide updates, prioritize needs, plan follow-up actions, and ongoing debriefing of team members.
❒ Hold a final debriefing to review the management of the crisis, ensure that team members’ needs have received proper attention, complete all necessary records and bring closure for the team.

Crisis Management Reporting Form

Coffeyville Public Schools
615 Ellis - Coffeyville, KS 67337
620-252-6400

* See Crisis Intervention Checklists throughout the manual for steps to consider in the event of a crisis

FOR USD 445 STAFF PURPOSES ONLY
Person completing this form _____ Person contacting District Office _____

Background of Incident

The purpose of the Crisis Management Reporting Form is to assist a site Crisis Response Team (CRT) organize a comprehensive response.

Informing the School Community about a Crisis

The site administrator must take four concerns into consideration before informing a school community about a crisis:

- When the announcement will be made,
- What the content of the announcement will be,
- What method will be employed to make the announcement,
- What reactions may arise as a result of the announcement.

The following points should be considered before making an announcement regarding a crisis:

❒ KNOW THE FACTS Before informing students, faculty, or families about a crisis, be sure of the facts of the crisis. In addition, be sure which facts can be shared publicly. Reports regarding a potential crisis should be researched before information is disseminated.

❒ CONSULT Before acting, assemble the site crisis response team, and if necessary, contact the Nurse of the Day for technical assistance regarding how to proceed when informing the school community of the incident .

❒ DO NOT USE SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES OR PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS These methods of sharing information are impersonal and can compound the crisis, making the crisis response more difficult to manage. Having classroom teachers read an information sheet in the context of a classroom debriefing exercise is the most effective way to inform students. The same announcement should be made simultaneously in each class. See Section G, "Supporting Activities" for additional information.

❒ DO NOT DELAY Delaying the announcement creates the possibility that rumors will replace the facts of the crisis. Not informing the school community promptly with accurate information also leads to anger and frustration. Students, faculty, and families may think that information is being withheld deliberately, leaving them to feel “no one cares.” See individual sections within the manual for concrete suggestions regarding the content of the announcement.

❒ KNOW THE PLAN Make information available only when there is a clear plan in place to respond to the needs of individual students, faculty, or family members. Not having a comprehensive plan compounds the crisis.

Guidelines for Media Responses/Release

There may be inquiries regarding a crisis from the media. The Crisis Response Team Media Contact Person should coordinate with the Office of Public Engagement about media requests. The Office of Public Engagement can assist in prioritizing media requests, issues of confidentiality, and assists with giving a consistent message regarding the school site response to the crisis.

"NEWS MEDIA CRISIS SITUATION... WHAT WILL THEY ASK YOU?" Adapted from list provided by Michael Guerin, Asst. Chief, Law Enforcement Division, Governor's Office of Emergency Services. "Nothing is more destructive than different sources of information with different messages. Coordinate with District Officials."

An interview is an opportunity to "bridge" from media questions to the messages YOU want to convey to the public: "We care...the situation is under control." "This is what we're doing..." "Everything is going to be OK."

Conditions of Students/Staff

Hint: Express concern for and empathy with victims.
Hint: Speak from the viewpoint of public interest, not organization's interest.
Hint: Avoid jargon/acronyms, e.g. ESOL students

Number Injured/Killed

Potentially affects number
Nature of injuries
Care given to injured
Disposition of injured/fatalities
Example: Staff members have accompanied injured students to the name of hospital(s) until family members arrived.

Property Damage

Estimated Value
Hint: Avoid conjecture. Figures used by the media may become Public Record.
Example: There has been considerable damage. We are in the process of assessing the extent of loss
Description
Importance

Causes

How discovered
Chronology
Were any measures taken to avoid/eliminate/minimize the disaster?
Example: Emergency Services Plan

Rescue & Relief

What is being done?
Example: Crisis Response Team
Personnel engaged in operation
How people/property were saved

Description of Crisis

Extent of involvement
Do not release name of suspects
Refer questions to USD 445
Hint: Avoid conjecture
State only facts

People's Reactions

How are students/staff/parents reacting?
Example: Children are safe; the situation is under control. School will remain open.
OR: Children have been evacuated to ____ (where parents or persons listed on their child's emergency card may pick them up.

What help is available?

Example: Crisis Response Team members are assisting students and staff.

Documentation: Keep a record of persons you speak with, the organization the person represents (if any), when you spoke, and what you said, (it helps to prepare a "script.")
If there's a delay in releasing information, explain and have someone return the call. Learn the caller's deadline.
If you don't know the answer—especially to questions that begin with "why?"—don't speculate. Offer to get the information to the caller when it's available.
When the news media has insufficient information, they will repeat what they have.
When authorities will not comment, the news media will speculate.
Assume the microphone is on and the cameras are on and rolling.
Assume that nothing is off the record.

B. Crisis Response Team

Assembling a Crisis Response Team

For a school site to implement a comprehensive response to a crisis, a working team is imperative. An effective Crisis Response Team will make decisions as a team and will have various roles/responsibilities assigned to individual team members. **Team members should be identified prior to a crisis.** In addition, team members should know where the Crisis Response Manual is located, and should receive training as a Crisis Response Team Member.

The size of a CRT will depend on several issues including the number of students, staff configuration, and the type of crisis.

The Site Crisis Response Team may include:

- Administrator or Designee (Team Leader)
- Secretary Teacher (s)
- Counselor
- School Resource/SFPD Officer
- Other appropriate on-site staff, which may include: elementary advisor, parent liaison, peer resource coordinator, wellness coordinator, school district nurse, security guards, custodian, etc.

Some key roles and a description of the responsibilities are listed below:

Team Leader:

- Convenes CRT when a crisis occurs;
- Coordinates efforts with emergency services if they have been called;
- Orchestrates the site's response utilizing the Crisis Management Reporting Form as a general guide;
- Ensures that all team members fulfill their responsibilities;
- Arranges for staff coverage as needed;
- Plans CRT meetings regularly during the crisis to report on response of students and staff and actions taken;
- Completes necessary reports and documentation;
- Spearheads evaluation of the site response and oversees any necessary changes to improve site response in the future.
- Ensures that the manual is updated each time revisions are received from the School Health Programs Department.

Media Contact Person:

- Serves as point person if the crisis attracts media attention;
- Alerts the Office of Public Engagement of the crisis and potential for media interest;
- Follows Office of Public Engagement instructions regarding contact with the media;
- Notifies school to avoid media interviews, stressing the use of "discretion." Staff should refer all media calls to the site media contact person.

Assembling a Crisis Response Team cont.

Debriefing Lead

- Assesses impact of crisis and debriefing need of students and staff;
- Prepares and distributes classroom debriefing materials;
- Arranges for additional classroom debriefing facilitators, if needed;
- Arranges for individual and/or small group counseling, if necessary;
- Prepares a schedule of counseling staff or outside counselors available for grief/loss counseling;
- Informs staff of counseling plans;
- Schedules space for small group counseling;
- Arranges for CRT debriefing sessions throughout the crisis.

Parents/Caregivers/Community Lead

- Represents the site with families of any student(s) directly involved in the crisis (e.g. rape, suicide, injury, death);
- Responds to telephone calls from parents/caregivers;
- Prepares letter and attachment(s) for parents/caregivers;
- Arranges for distribution of materials to go home;
- Arranges parent/caregiver meeting, if crisis warrants;
- Arranges for availability of translators to respond to parents/caregivers telephone calls.

Building/Grounds Lead

- Secures building if crisis warrants;
- Arranges change in bus schedule, if necessary;
- Arrange bell schedule change, if necessary.

Crisis Response Team Care Tips

To maximize the functioning of the site Crisis Response Team, team members should provide debriefing for each other and for the team. Care providers in a crisis perform at their best when their responses to a crisis are articulated.

The following guidelines are provided to assist school site CRTs with their own debriefing.

❒ MAKE THE TEAM A PRIORITY. Take adequate breaks and monitor each other's functioning. Make certain that leadership is supported and/or that leadership is rotated. Often leaders need to be somewhat removed from the operations to ensure a clear perspective. Attempt tasks that are reasonable.
❒ ESTABLISH A CENTER FOR THE TEAM. This allows for situational updates and clear communication. It also provides a safe place to be and to get away from the crisis.
❒ SPEND ADEQUATE TIME ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND STAFF.
❒ DEVELOP A PLAN BASED ON NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY. As new information surfaces, reprioritize the needs.
❒ BUILD YOUR OWN INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. It is only by doing that we develop sensitivity to our internal states and changes, and only by receiving feedback can we accurately gauge our effects upon others.
❒ BECOME AWARE OF YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS AND VULNERABLE AREAS. Discover what parts of you are likely to get bruised and what feelings are likely to surface doing crisis work. Find ways to meet personal needs.
❒ MONITOR YOUR RECEPTIVITY LEVEL. If you are feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, or helpless, take a break. If you are unaffected, check whether you are "blocking" the feelings, trying to "tough it out."
❒ TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF: EAT WELL, EXERCISE WELL AND REST WELL. Beware of excesses that may include alcohol consumption. Participate in activities what will comfort you. Don't be afraid to talk about your reaction.
❒ PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FORMAL TEAM DEBRIEFING. See Section G, "Classroom or After-School Support Activities" suggestions for the debriefing process.

C. Death, Dying and Loss

Checklist for a Crisis Involving Death:

Immediate Considerations:

- ❒ Assemble the CRT and relieve members of routine responsibilities.
- ❒ Notify Superintendent, and, thereafter, keep them informed about steps being taken.
- ❒ Contact appropriate family member(s) to obtain accurate information.
- ❒ Determine what information can be shared, including info on memorial service etc.
- ❒ Coordinate with Site Team and Superintendent exactly what can/will be shared.
- ❒ Identify close friends/associates on-site who might be impacted.
- ❒ Clarify a system to identify and refer students/staff who may need emotional support.
- ❒ Inform, in person, staff members and/or students most closely associated.
- ❒ Provide relief if teachers are unable to continue with their duties. Follow up as needed.
- ❒ Make an initial determination of the capacity of site staff needed to respond to the crisis.
- ❒ Contact school nurse, student services support, other administrators in the district.
- ❒ Inform other admin of possible connections or relatives at other schools.
- ❒ Inform the rest of the staff at an emergency staff meeting.
- ❒ Inform students, if necessary. Never utilize intercom system for this.

Secondary Considerations:

- ❒ Support students closest to the crisis.
- ❒ Provide whatever debriefing is necessary for students and staff.
- ❒ If a student death, notify attendance office to forestall intrusive attendance calls.
- ❒ Arrange for removal of personal belongings from school site.
- ❒ Notify parents/caregivers in writing of the crisis so they can support their children.
- ❒ Determine if additional planning is needed to bring closure to the crisis (funeral).

Announcement of Death to Staff:

Sample Announcement to Staff Following a Death

(Date)

Dear Staff,

There are times when it is necessary to communicate news that is painful for all of us. During those times we must be prepared to support each other as we deal with the many feelings that we begin to experience. It is with great sorrow that I inform you that (**NAME OF PERSON)** at **(SCHOOL NAME)** has died.

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. We will all begin to feel different emotions: shock, sadness, confusion, even some anger. What is most important is that we care for and support each other.

Sometimes students are affected by the death of someone important to them, and they may need to express their feelings. Please contact appropriate support service site staff if you notice a student who appears to be having more difficulty with his/her feelings than might be expected.

In memory of **(NAME)**, *indicate here what activity or activities the school is planning.* **(SCHOOL NAME)** administration will keep you updated as more information is given us at the school.

Sincerely,

(Principal's name)

Announcement of Death to Students:

Sample Announcement to Students Following a Death

(Date)

Dear Students,

I have asked your teacher to read this letter to you because I want to make sure that all students receive the same information about the recent tragedy at our school. It gives me great sorrow to inform you that **(NAME)**, a **(teacher student/friend)** at **(SCHOOL NAME)**, has died **(DAY/DATE)**. *(Insert what information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death)*

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. Many of us may be confronted with a variety of emotions which might include shock, sandness, and confusion. I want to assure you that we, the **(SCHOOL NAME)** staff, care about you and the feelings you may be experiencing.

Please know that we want to support you during this time. The Crisis Response Team will be available to meet with you in **(PLACE)** to assist you in dealing with any feelings you may be having. You might wish to share memories you have of **(NAME)**. Crisis Response Team members will also be available at any time during the day to help you if you feel a more urgent need to talk with someone. *(Insert here specific information on how students can access support service staff and collaborating agencies for support.)* I want to encourage those students who may be particularly upset, perhaps even struggling with death in the family or of a friend, to talk with Crisis Response Team members. They will be available to meet with you.

Any time death touches us, it is stressful. This sudden death may be quite shocking to you and confuse you. For those reasons, we especially want you to know of our care and support.

Sincerely,

(Principal's name)

Announcement of Death to Families:

Sample Announcement to Families Following a Death

(Date)

Dear Parent and Caregivers:

I am sorry to inform you that a staff person/student/friend, **(NAME),** at **(SCHOOL NAME)**, has died **(DAY/DATE)**. *(Insert what information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death.)*

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. All of us will be feeling a variety of emotions: shock, sandness, or confusion. What is most important is that we care for and support each other.

The Crisis Response Team has made plans to respond to the emotional needs of the students. *(Spell out what is being done: grief counseling, classroom debriefing, referrals to support service staff and community based organizations)*

If your family has experienced a death or similar loss recently, the death of **(NAME)** may bring up feelings about that death. This is a normal experience. Please let your child's *(teacher or counselor)* know if there is any additional information the school should be aware of so we can provide the support your child needs.

Any time death touches us, it is stressful. This sudden death may be disturbing to you as well as to your child. It is for this reason that we especially want you to know of our care and support.

Sincerely,

(Principal's name)

Common Stages of Grief

COMMON STAGES OF GRIEF*

DENIAL: This stage may be expressed by feeling nothing or insisting there has been no change. It is an important stage and gives people "time out" to organize their feelings and responses. Children/adolescents may make bargains to bring the person back or hold fantasy beliefs about the person's return. children/adolescents in this stage need understanding and time.

FEAR: A crisis that results in death or a crisis that is the result of violence can instill fear in children. A child or adolescent might fear that their own parent/caregiver might die after a classmate's parent dies. Children need reassurance that they will be taken care of during this stage.

ANGER: The sudden shattering of the safe assumptions of young people lies at the root of the grief response of anger. It can be expressed in nightmares and fears and in disruptive behavior. Children in this stage need opportunities to express anger in a positive and healthy way.

DEPRESSION: Children may exhibit depression either through frequent crying, lethargy and withdrawal from activities, or avoidance behavior ("running away"). This can be a healthy, self-protective response that protects children/adolescents from too much emotional impact. Children need to know that others understand and that all things change, including their sadness.

ACCEPTANCE: Acceptance of a loss and hope as seen through renewed energy signals entrance into the final stage of grieving. Before children can return to equilibrium, they need permission to cease mourning and continue living.

*Adults experience these stages also. Depending on individual needs, an individual, whether a child or an adult, may stay in one stage for a long time, move back and forth from one stage to another, or move through each stage in the order listed.

Help with Grief

WAYS FOR FAMILIES TO HELP YOUTH WITH GRIEF

General Information
Your child has recently experienced a loss at school, either through the death of a classmate or staff person, or has a classmate that has lost a family member. Each child grieves differently. It is most important that children get sympathy and nonjudgmental responses from their family members. Keep communicating with your child to create a safe, supportive environment. Talking about feelings is very important. When children see adults expressing their feelings about a loss in a healthy way, they learn how to do it too.

Possible Behavioral Changes

- Restlessness and change in activity level
- Expression of security issues: Will this happen to me or others
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers
- Withdrawal and unwillingness to discuss the loss
- Fearfulness, especially of being left alone • Regression to younger behaviors—bedwetting, thumbsucking
- Symptoms of illness: nausea, loss of appetite, diffuse aches and pains
- Feeling guilty that it is their fault

Response of Parents/Caregivers

Children need a sense of security when a loss occurs. It is important to keep to the family routine as much as possible. Children may need more personal attention at bedtime.

- Simple answers to such questions as, “When will you die?,” “Can I get sick too?,” or “Does everyone die?” will provide reassurance to children. Adults can seek further information to learn what the child’s concern is, “Are you concerned that I might not be here to care for you?” or “Are you worried you might die soon too?” Brief answers based on fact are best: “I don’t plan to die for a long time. I hope to take care of you as long as you might need me.” or “We all die. However, I don’t think you need to worry that you will die yet. We are going to try and keep you well for many years.”
- Everyone in the family needs reassurance. Children may ask endless questions. They need information and reassurances given repeatedly. Extra play may be needed to relieve the tension related to their grief.
- It is also important to explain to children that the crisis is not their fault.

Tips for Teachers

TIPS FOR TEACHERS TO HELP A STUDENT AFTER A DEATH

The following are some suggestions for helping students who experience loss.

- **Remember that adults can make a difference** helping students when they have problems with death, because most of them have faced the death of loved ones and other significant losses.
- **Listen and empathize.** Make sure you hear what is said.
- **Maintain a sympathetic never-shaming attitude** toward the student's response.
- **Respond with authentic feelings.** It is acceptable to express sorrow to a child.
- **Allow students to cry by giving permission:** "Go ahead and cry, it's all right." Permission may be necessary, since so many strong feelings are labeled as being publicly unacceptable and some students are taught not to show emotions in public. Extreme responses of grief may mean a student might need personal assistance.
- **Remember that ignoring grief will not make it go away.** Research shows a relationship between antisocial behavior among adolescents and unresolved grief over the death of a loved one.
- **Assure younger siblings that they are not responsible** for the person's death although they might have had negative feelings about him or her at some time.
- **Refer students for help when necessary.** At times, normal grief may look like mental illness. When a teacher observes behavior such as unusual swings in emotions, moods, or thoughts that indicate a loss of contact with reality, it is time to refer that student for support and assistance.
- **Recognize that grief may last over an extended period of time.** When grief is openly expressed, the first six months constitute the most stressful period. Recovery begins during the first year and occurs more conclusively by the end of the second year (refer to "Common Stages of Grief" on page C-5.)

Memorialization Policy for Student/Staff Deaths

This policy is intended to be used when considering memorialization for all deaths, including suicide deaths. Our school is committed to consulting with the family of the deceased in each case.

Flags: Flags will not be flown at half-staff. Only the President of the United States or a governor has the authority to order flags to be flown at half-staff.

Memorials: Spontaneous memorials (such as collections of objects and notes) are not encouraged and will be respectfully removed as soon as possible. A memorial can be an upsetting reminder of a loss and can romanticize the deceased in a way that increases risk for suicide imitation or contagion.

Assemblies: Large memorial assemblies will not be convened as the emotions generated at such a gathering can be difficult to control. Instead, students will have opportunities to process their emotions individually or in small groups with trained counselors.

Graduations: Students who have died will be acknowledged and remembered at graduation ceremonies, but will not be the focus of the event so as not to glorify the student's death or overwhelm attendees and/or graduates. Specifically, the deceased student will be named in the beginning of the graduation ceremony and the speaker will facilitate a moment of silence for those we've lost. Physical memorials at graduation ceremonies are not permitted. Graduating students who are deceased is not permitted.

Funerals: Funerals and other memorial services are not to be held on school grounds under any circumstances.

Long-Term Memorials: Permanent or long-term memorials for a deceased student shall not be permitted on school grounds.

Guidelines for Appropriate Memorials

- Involve students in the decision-making process and solicit ideas from them to memorialize the deceased in positive ways that do not put other students at risk or contribute to the emotional crisis that occurs after a death.
- Memorials should be temporary, non-renewable, or "living" (e.g. monetary donation to charity or research, purchase of a suicide prevention program for students, etc.).
- Memorials should celebrate the deceased student's life, not glorify their death.
- Consult with the family of the deceased before implementing any memorials.
- Examples of safe memorialization:
    - Invite students to write personal and lasting remembrances in a memory book located in the counseling office, which will ultimately be given to the family. ○ Encourage students to engage in service projects, such as organizing a community service day, sponsoring behavioral health awareness programs, or becoming involved in a peer support program.
    - Invite students to make donations to the library or to a scholarship fund in memory of the deceased.

D. Suicide

Checklist for a Crisis Involving Suicide:

Immediate Considerations:

- ❒ If the suicide attempt is on site, contact 911.
- ❒ Convene the Crisis Response Team and review situations and roles.
- ❒ Notify Student Services Coordinator, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.
- ❒ Verify information regarding the suicide.
- ❒ Prepare formal statement to faculty/staff: remember to stress CONFIDENTIALITY.
- ❒ Convene emergency staff meeting.
- ❒ Prepare formal statement or announcement for students (NEVER or intercom/assembly).
- ❒ Establish debriefing plan for all students and staff impacted by the crisis.
- ❒ Identify students, staff and parents likely to be most affected by news.
- ❒ Assess need for additional community resources.
- ❒ Assign trained staff or additional professionals to specific duties necessitated by the crisis.
- ❒ Provide coverage for absent / substitute teachers.
- ❒ Prepare and plan for distribution of letter or info to families.
- ❒ Update faculty on a regular basis, including debriefing opportunities.
- ❒ Complete and forward Incident Report to Central Office.
- ❒ Notify Attendance Office to forestall intrusive calls home.

Secondary Considerations:

- ❒ Arrange for removal of personal belongings from school site.
- ❒ Debrief Crisis Response Team.
- ❒ Assess Procedures Changes moving forward.

Student Re-entry Checklist:

Consider a comprehensive plan if the student who attempted suicide is to return to school. A release of information may need to be signed by parent/guardian if there is to be communication with a mental health provider or hospital.

- ❒ Designate a school contact person for student re-entry following a suicide attempt.
- ❒ Plan when and where the student will check-in with site contact.
- ❒ Anticipate the need for additional counseling.
- ❒ Consider what resources are available for on-site counseling support, if needed.
- ❒ Inform necessary teachers regarding the student's absence.
- ❒ Discuss with student's teachers a plan for student to make-up or exempt assignments.
- ❒ If key students are affected by the student's absence, provide appropriate plans for them.
- ❒ Clarify the plan for regular contacts with parent/guardian if appropriate.

Following a Suicide:

Sample Letter to School Community Following a Suicide

(Date)

Dear School Community:

I am sorry to inform you that a staff person/student/friend, **(NAME),** at **(SCHOOL NAME)** has died **(DAY/DATE)**. *(Before stating this is a death by suicide, be sure of the accuracy of the report, and if the family will allow this information to be shared. Only then, insert the information regarding the cause and circumstances regarding the death.)*

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. All of us will be feeling a variety of emotions: shock, sadness, even some confusion. What is most important is that we care for and support each other.

The Crisis Response Team has made plans to respond toe the emotional needs of the students. *(Spell out what is being done: grief counseling, classroom debriefing, referrals)*

If your family has experienced a death or similar loss recently, the death of **(NAME)** may bring up feelings about that death. This is a normal experience. Although rare, sometimes students may be so overwhelmed by the death of someone close to them, that they may express suicidal thoughts or actions. Please let your child's *(teacher or counselor)* know if there is any additional information the school should be aware of so we can provide the support your child needs.

Any time death touches us, it is extremely stressful. This sudden death may be disturbing to you as well as your child. It is for this reason that we especially, want you to know of our caring and support.

Be sure to include appropriate resources for families.

Sincerely,

(Principal's name)

Suicide Intervention Policy:
School Suicide Intervention Protocol
Notifying Parents and Guardians

Parents and/or guardians should be contacted as soon as possible after a student has been identified as being at risk for suicide. The person who contacts the family is typically the principal, school psychologist, or a staff member with a special relationship with the student or family. Staff need to be sensitive toward the family's culture, including attitudes towards suicide, mental health, privacy and help-seeking.

1. Notify the parents about the situation and ask that they come to the school immediately.

2. When the parents arrive at the school, explain why you screened the student for suicidality and the outcome of that screening.

3. Explain the importance of removing from the home (or locking up) firearms and other dangerous items, including over-the-counter and prescription medications and alcohol.

4. If the student is at a low or moderate suicide risk and does not need to be hospitalized, discuss available options for individual and/or family therapy. Provide the parents with the contact information of mental health service providers in the community. If possible, call and make an appointment while the parents are with you.

5. Ask the parents to sign the Parent Contact Acknowledgment Form confirming that they were notified of their child's risk and received referrals to treatment.

6. If the student does not need to be hospitalized, release the student to the parents.

7. Tell the parents that you will follow up with them in a few days. If this follow-up conversation reveals that the parent has not contacted the mental health provider:

    a. Stress the importance of getting the child help

    b. Discuss why they have not contacted a provider and offer to assist with the process

8. If the parents refuse to seek services for a child under the age of 18 who you believe is in danger of self-harm and/or suicide, you may need to notify child protective services that the child is being neglected.

9. Document all contacts with the parents and child.

Supporting Parents through Their Child's Suicidal Crisis

Family Support is Critical: When an adolescent experiences a suicidal crisis, the whole family is in crisis. If at all possible, it is important to reach out to the family for two very important reasons:

1) The family may very well be left without professional support or guidance in what is often a state of acute personal shock or distress. Many people do not seek help - they don't know where to turn.

2) Informed parents are probably

Remember, a prior attempt is the strongest predictor of suicide. The goal of extending support to the parents is to help them to a place where they can intervene appropriately to prevent this young person from attempting suicide again. Education and information are vitally important to family members and close friends who find themselves in a position to observe the at-risk individual.

The following steps can help support and engage parents:

1. Invite the parents' perspective. State what you have noticed in their child's behavior (rather than the results of your assessment) and ask how that fits with what they have Observed.
2. Advise parents to remove lethal means from the home while the child is possibly suicidal, just as you would advise taking car keys from a youth who had been drinking.
3. Comment on how scary this behavior is and how it complicates the life of everyone who cares about this young person.
4. Acknowledge the parents' emotional state, including anger, if present.
5. Acknowledge that no one can do this alone - appreciate their presence.
6. Listen for myths of suicide that may be blocking the parent from taking action.
7. Explore reluctance to accept a mental health referral, address those issues, explain what they can expect.
8. Align yourself with the parent if possible - explore how and where youth get this idea without in any way minimizing the behavior.

Preventing Teen Suicide

Know the Warning Signs

What issues might make a teen more likely to attempt suicide? The risk factors for teen suicide include untreated depression, pressures to overachieve, sexual identity crises, serious conflicts with family and friends, abuse, and problems with school or the law. Many youth attempt suicide while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Look out for these warning signs for suicide in teens:
• Talking about or making plans for suicide—even jokingly
• A focus on themes of death
• Feelings of hopelessness, often with anxiety
• Giving away prized possessions
• Persistent boredom and/or difficulty concentrating
• Complaints of physical problems that are not real
• Noticeable changes in eating or sleeping habits
• Unexplained, unusually severe, violent, or rebellious behavior
• Withdrawal from family or friends
• Running away
• Drug or alcohol abuse
• Unexplained drop in quality of schoolwork
• Unusual neglect of appearance
• Drastic personality change
• Threatening or attempting to kill oneself Many youth who consider suicide simply want to find a way to end their pain or to solve a problem. They do not necessarily want to die, but they have not found another solution.

INTERVENTION REPORT
PARENT/GUARDIAN PLAN OF ACTION

Student Name: **Date:**

I understand that my child has been assessed for risk to self/others, due to the following indicators:

- ❑ Experiencing current thoughts of suicide
- ❑ Has immediate intent to act on thoughts of suicide
- ❑ Has the means available to complete suicide

  If yes, provide details:

- ❑ Experienced thoughts of suicide in the past
- ❑ Previous suicide attempts
- ❑ Reported threats to harm others

  If yes, provide details:

- ❑ Reports of recent self injuring

  If yes, date of most recent act: _____

- ❑ Other

Immediate Plan of Action:

Appointment Date and Time/Provider:

Follow up visit with USD 445 Counseling Department:

INTERVENTION REPORT
PARENT/GUARDIAN PLAN OF ACTION

Release to Parent

I have been informed by school personnel of their concerns for my child. I understand that I am responsible for taking action necessary to ensure my child's continued safety.

Parent/Guardian signature	*Relationship to student*	*Date*

USD 445 staff signature	*Title*	*Date*

Emergency Resources:

Four County Mental Health Center
Coffeyville: 620-251-8180
Independence: 620-331-1748
Crisis Line: 1-800-499-1748

Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas
Coffeyville, 801 W. 8th Street: 620-251-4300
Coffeyville FKHS clinic: 620-252-1798
Coffeyville CES clinic: 620-252-6989

Labette Mental Health Center
Daytime and crisis line: 800.303.3770 or 620.421.3770

Grand Lake Mental Health Center
Nowata County Clinic: 918-273-1841
Washington County Clinic (Bartlesville): 918-337-8080
Crisis: 1-800-722-3611

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741741

Suicide Intervention Policy:
School Suicide Attempt Response Protocol
Guidelines for Facilitating a Student's Return to School

These guidelines will help staff plan for a student's return to school after a suicide attempt or mental health crisis. In addition to meeting regularly with the student, the staff member facilitating the student's return should do the following:

1. Become familiar with the basic information about the case, including:
    a. How the student's risk status was identified
    b. What precipitated the student's high-risk status or suicide attempt
    c. What medication(s) the student is taking

2. With the family's agreement, serve as the school's primary link to the parents and maintain regular contact with the family:
    a. Call or meet frequently with the family.
    b. Facilitate referral of the family for family counseling if appropriate.
    c. Meet with the student and his or her family and relevant school staff (e.g., the school counselor or social worker) about what services the student will need upon returning to school.

3. Serve as liaison to other teachers and staff members, with permission of the family, regarding the student, which could involve the following:
    a. Ask the student about his or her academic concerns and discuss potential Options.
    b. Educate teachers and other relevant staff members about warning signs of another suicide crisis.
    c. Meet with appropriate staff to create an individualized reentry plan prior to the student's return and discuss possible arrangements for services the student needs.
    d. Modify the student's schedule and course load to relieve stress, if necessary.
    e. Arrange tutoring from peers or teachers, if necessary.
    f. Work with teachers to allow makeup work to be extended without penalty.
    g. Monitor the student's progress.
    h. Inform teachers and other relevant staff members about the possible side effects of the medication(s) being taken by the student and the procedures for notifying the appropriate staff member (e.g., the school nurse, psychologist, or social worker) if these side effects are observed. When sharing information about medical treatment, you need to comply with FERPA and HIPAA (which protects release of an individual's health information).

4. Follow up behavioral and/or attendance problems of the student by:
    a. Meet with teachers to help them understand appropriate limits and consequences of behavior
    b. Discuss concerns and options with the student

c. Consult with the school's discipline administrator

d. Consult with the student's mental health service provider to understand whether, for example, these behaviors could be associated with medication being taken by the student

e. Monitor daily attendance by placing the student on a sign-in/sign-out attendance sheet to be signed by the classroom teachers and returned to the attendance office at the end of the school day

f. Make home visits or have regularly scheduled parent conferences to review attendance and discipline record

g. Facilitate counseling for the student specific to these problems at school

5. If the student is hospitalized, obtain the family's agreement to consult with the hospital staff regarding issues such as:

a. Deliver classwork assignments to be completed in the hospital or at home, as appropriate

b. Allow a representative from school to visit the student in the hospital or at home with the permission of the parents

c. Attend treatment planning meetings and the hospital discharge conference with the permission of the parents

6. Establish a plan for periodic contact with the student while he or she is away from school

7. If the student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time, determine how to help them complete course requirements

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Coffeyville Public Schools

Suicide Response Team:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- School Counselors
- School Psychologists
- School Social Workers
- School Nurse
- Superintendent (as needed)

Suicide Response Coordinator: Lead School Counselor

Backup Suicide Response Coordinator: Alternate School Counselor or Designee

Initial Responsibilities:
1. Convene the Suicide Response Team in the Command Center.
2. Ensure that each member of the Suicide Response Team has a copy of the completed suicide response plan.
3. Ensure that each person who has the lead responsibility or backup responsibility for a particular step has the tools necessary to complete the task.
4. Tape a Master Copy of the Immediate Response Checklist to the table of the Command Center so that team members can confirm when their tasks have been completed.

Summer Response Protocol and Checklist:
If a suicide occurs during a long-term school break, the school will tailor the Immediate Response Checklist to facilitate a more appropriate response. Be sure to include the following:

- Verify student death
- Notify suicide response team
- Notify superintendent's office
- Notify district crisis team
- Contact and coordinate with external mental health professionals
- Outreach and coordinate with family of deceased
- Notify all school staff
- Notify students and parents
- Offer specific student/parent/staff support times at the school
    - Include crisis counselors from Four County Mental Health Center and/or KSPHQ
    - Identify which members of the suicide response team will be present
- Prepare to acknowledge the suicide death when students return to school
    - Teachers will read a sample script to students similar to Beginning of Day 2
    - Crisis counselors will be onsite or on-call

Immediate Response Protocol:
The Suicide Response Team will work through the **Immediate Response Checklist**, as assigned, until it is completed. Upon completion of a designated task, the responsible individual will fill out the TASK COMPLETED box on the Master Copy of the checklist in the Command Center.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

NOTIFY KEY INDIVIDUALS	
1. Verify Death	Lead: Police: (dispatch) Backup: (after hours supervisor) Chief: Coroner: Parent/Guardian: Completed Not Completed Initials: Date/Time:
2. Notify Suicide Response Team	Lead: See Initiate Suicide Response Team Phone Tree Backup: Completed Not Completed Initials: Date/Time:
3. Identify suicide response coordinator and establish Command Center	Lead: Backup: Completed Not Completed Initials: Date/Time:
4. Ensure that office staff are aware of and have copies of the Inquiry Response Protocol (Appendix A)	Lead: Office Staff Contacts: Backup: Completed Not Completed Initials: Date/Time:

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

5. Notify superintendent's office	Lead: Superintendent's Contact: Completed Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
6. Notify district crisis team	Lead: District Crisis Team Names and Contact Info: Completed Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
7. Notify schools attended by family members of deceased	Lead: Other relevant schools and contacts for each: Completed Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
8. Contact and coordinate with external mental health professionals	Lead: KSPHQ Admin: Completed 785-841-9900 Not Completed Backup: KSPHQ Hotline: Initials: 785-841-2345 Community Mental Health Date/Time: Center:

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

9. Reach out to and work with the family of the deceased (Appendix B)	Leads: Family of Deceased Contact Info: Completed / Not Completed Initials: Backups: Date/Time:
NOTIFY SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
10. Notify all faculty and staff (Appendix C)	Lead: Completed / Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
11. Prepare teachers to notify student and ensure they have tangible copies of the script and talking points to support students (Appendix D) (Appendix F)	Lead: Completed / Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
12. Notify families of students about the death and the school's response (Appendix E)	Lead: Completed / Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

SUPPORT STUDENTS AND STAFF		
13. Provide periodic check ins and continued support for staff (Appendix F)	Lead: Backup: KSPHQ: 785-841-2345 Community Mental Health Center: Date/Time:	Completed Not Completed Initials:
14. Identify, monitor, and support students who may be at risk	Lead: Backup: KSPHQ: 785-841-2345 Community Mental Health Center: Date/Time:	Completed Not Completed Initials:
15. Implement steps to help students with emotional regulation (Stanley-Brown Safety Plan)	Lead: Backup: KSPHQ: 785-841-2345 Community Mental Health Center: Date/Time:	Completed Not Completed Initials:

16. Participate in and/or advise on appropriate memorialization in the immediate aftermath (Appendix G)	Leads: Completed Not Completed Initials: Backups: Date/Time:

Created by Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ, 2021
Adapted from *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

MINIMIZE RISK OF CONTAGION THROUGH THE MEDIA	
17. Work with press/media (Appendix H)	Lead: Local Media Requests: Completed Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:
18. Monitor social media (Appendix I)	Lead: Completed Not Completed Backup: Initials: Date/Time:

NOTES:

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Guidelines for Managing Inquiries in Early Stages

Office staff should utilize this protocol to ensure appropriate responses to phone calls and other inquiries received in the early stages of a suicide crisis.

Informational Script for Parents
*This script should be used when parents are calling to ask for clarification about whether or not the news they've been given is true.

Today all students were informed that one of their peers, [insert student's name], *has died by suicide. This is the only verified information we have at the moment. Crisis counselors and school staff are working to support students individually and in groups. If you'd like to remove your child from school today, you are welcome to do so. We are encouraging students not to be alone right now in order to minimize risk and increase safety and support. You will be receiving correspondence later this afternoon that includes resources and information about the school's plan to support students ongoing. If you need immediate assistance, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.*

Follow the guidelines below for other inquiries.

- **Calls unrelated to the crisis:** Take messages to keep short
- **Police or other security professionals:** Refer to Principal or Assistant Principal
- **Family members of the deceased:** Refer to Principal (interrupt anything)
- **Other school administrators:** Give out basic information about the death and crisis response; Offer to transfer to Assistant Principal
- **Parents regarding their child's immediate safety:** Read informational script; Transfer to crisis team if absolutely necessary
- **Persons who call with information about others at risk:** Take down detailed information - social media posts, names of students, verbatim statements, etc. - and get it to a crisis team member immediately; Take a phone number where the person can be called back by a crisis team member
- **Media:** Release no information; Refer to District Office
- **Parents generally wanting to know how to respond:** Read informational script, relay resources that parents can utilize; Take messages for crisis team members if parents want further information
    - Resource list to include:
        - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
        - Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ 785-841-2345
        - Supporting Children After Suicide Loss
- **Where to send parents who arrive at the school unannounced:** Designate a space for parents to wait and get information. Provide those parents with tips for supporting their child and inform them of the school's plans to continue support. Any person removing a student from school must be on the annual registration form as the parent or guardian. Records must be kept of who removed the student and when.

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Guidelines for Working with the Family

Representatives from the school should follow the guidelines below when working with the family of the deceased student.

1. Appoint two representatives (administrator and counselor/social worker) from the school to engage the family.
2. Representatives should reach out to the family via phone call and request an in-person visit (preferably in the family's home, if possible; certainly not at the school). a. If the deceased student splits time between two or more households, coordinate to the best of your ability (the District Office might be a neutral ground for meeting jointly).

During the visit with the family, the school representatives should:

- Offer the condolences of the school.
- Inquire about funeral arrangements. Ask if the funeral will be private or if the family will allow students to attend.
- Ask if the parents/guardians know of any other students who may be especially upset or at risk.
- Provide parents/guardians with information about grief counseling (brochures/materials). ○ Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ
  - ○ Create a resource list prior to visiting
- Ask the family if they would like their child's personal belongings returned. ○ Items found in student's locker
  - ○ In-class projects, homework assignments, etc.
  - ○ Any account balances/credits
- Give the option to take any school property with you at this time or let them know that you can follow up in a few weeks to return school property (ipad, books, etc.) ● Briefly explain to the parents/guardians what the school is doing to respond to the death, why this response is important, and ask if there is any information they would like to remain private.
- Provide a point-of-contact to the family for any future questions, needs, or concerns.

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Sample Scripts for Notifying Students

For an Official Suicide: Notification Announcement, Day 1
*This announcement should always be made in classrooms, preferably by teachers. It should never be made over a school's PA system, over email, or in assemblies.

Today we learned the extremely sad news that [insert student name] *took* his/her/their *life* [insert timeline - last night/this morning/yesterday]. *Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission. We are saddened by* [insert student's name]*'s death and will keep* [his/her/their] *family and friends in our hearts.*

I know this news is difficult to take in, and whatever you are feeling right now is valid and okay. I'm here to support you, and there are crisis counselors available today for anyone who wants to talk. Please let me or your other teachers know if you'd like to speak to a crisis counselor at any point throughout the day.

For a Suspicious Death Not Declared Suicide: Notification Announcement, Day 1 *This announcement should always be made in classrooms, preferably by teachers. It should never be made over a school's PA system, over email, or in assemblies.

Today we learned the extremely sad news that [insert student name] *died* [insert timeline - last night/this morning/yesterday]. *This is the only information we have officially received on the circumstances surrounding this death. Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission. We are saddened by* [insert student's name]*'s death and will keep* [his/her/their] *family and friends in our hearts.*

I know this news is difficult to take in, and whatever you are feeling right now is valid and okay. I'm here to support you, and there are crisis counselors available today for anyone who wants to talk. Please let me or your other teachers know if you'd like to speak to a crisis counselor at any point throughout the day.

Moment of Silence Announcement, End of Day 1
*This announcement should be made by a school administrator at the end of Day 1, prior to dismissal. It is appropriate for this announcement to be made over the school's PA system.

Today has been a sad and difficult day for all of us. We encourage you to talk about [insert student's name]*'s death with your friends, your family, and whoever else gives you support. We will have special staff here for you tomorrow to help in dealing with our loss. Let us end the day by having the whole school offer a moment of silence for* [insert student's name].

Thank you. Take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Supportive Announcement, Beginning of Day 2
*This announcement should be made by teachers in classrooms at the very beginning of Day 2. It should not be made over the school's PA system, over email, or in an assembly. It can include additional verified information, re-emphasize the continuing availability of in-school support, and provide information to facilitate grief.

We know that yesterday was difficult and emotional. Learning about a suicide death can be confusing and painful, and we know those feelings don't go away overnight. Even though we might try to understand the reasons why this has happened, we can never really know what was going on that led [insert student's name] *to this decision. One thing that's important to remember is that there is never just one reason for a suicide. There are many reasons or causes, and we will never be able to figure them all out. Not having closure is an especially hard part of grieving a suicide-loss, and I'm sorry that any of us has to experience that.*

Today we begin the process of returning to a normal schedule in school. This may prove very difficult for some of us and it may be a welcomed relief to others. Like we said yesterday, there is no "right way" to feel. Please know that counselors are still available in school to help us deal with our feelings. If you want to speak to a counselor, either alone or with a friend, please tell a teacher or another staff member and we will help make arrangements.

Funeral Services Announcement

*This announcement should be made by teachers in classrooms. It should not be made over the school's PA system, over email, or in an assembly.

We have information about [insert student's name]*'s funeral services. The visitation will be held on* [insert date, time, and place] *and the funeral will be on* [insert date, time, place]. *In order to be excused from school to attend the funeral, you will need to have your parent's permission. We also encourage you to ask your parents to go with you to the visitation.*

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Notifying Families of Death and Response Plan

REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE

Written Correspondence to Families, Day 1:
*This letter should be sent home with students and emailed to parents/guardians. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died by suicide [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. *Our thoughts and sympathies go out to* [his/her/their] *loved ones.*

All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. *I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them. Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer.*

Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school is consulting with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ (KSPHQ) to create a plan for ongoing support. KSPHQ serves as the leading expert in suicide prevention for Kansas. In addition to answering the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for the state, they also provide education, training, and consultation regarding best practices for suicide care. As a part of their crisis response services, KSPHQ offers specialized support to schools and communities after a suicide loss.

Suicide prevention experts suggest that talking openly about suicide is the safest and most protective thing we can do for our students. They also recommend that these conversations be ongoing, not time-limited. Similarly, we have come to understand that providing lasting support to students after a suicide death is best practice.

Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend.

I have included links and attachments in this email to help you navigate this difficult time with your child and to ensure that you have access to supports available to you.

- *10 Ways to Support a Loved One Who Has Lost Someone to Suicide*
- *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*
- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*
- *Crisis Text Line*

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Take care,

[Insert Signature]

REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE

Voice Message to Families, Day 1:
*This script should be read as an Infinite Campus phone message. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

Hello.This is [insert name]*, Principal at* [insert school].

I am delivering this message with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died by suicide [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. *Our thoughts and sympathies go out to* [his/her/their] *loved ones.*

All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. *I have sent all parents and guardians a letter which includes the script that was read to students along with valuable resources. This letter has been sent out via email and all students have paper copies to bring home. If you don't have access to this letter, please call us so that we can ensure you have all of the information we've been able to provide.*

Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer.

Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school administration is consulting with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ (KSPHQ) to create a plan for ongoing student support. KSPHQ serves as the leading expert in suicide prevention for Kansas. In addition to answering the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for the entire state, they also provide education, training, and consultation regarding best practices for suicide care. As a part of their crisis response services, KSPHQ offers specialized support to schools and communities after a suicide loss.

Suicide prevention experts suggest that talking openly about suicide is the safest and most protective thing we can do for our students. They also recommend that these conversations be ongoing, not time-limited. Similarly, we have come to understand that providing lasting support to students after a suicide death is best practice.

Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend.

If you are concerned about yourself or your child, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for immediate support. Their phone number is 1-800-273-8255. And of course, please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Thank you and take care.

REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE

Written Correspondence to Families, End of Week 1:
*This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email.

Hello Parents and Guardians,

We want to acknowledge the immense difficulty of this week as our community continues to process and grieve the suicide-loss of [insert student name]. *In the face of adversity, we have witnessed our students, our teachers and staff, and our parents and guardians display profound strength, resilience, and support. For this, we are extremely grateful.*

It's important to us that we keep you informed on all the steps we are taking to support the safety and well-being of our students. We will continue to collaborate with KSPHQ for the remainder of the school year, and will communicate any support plans to you accordingly.

Funeral services for [insert student name] *will take place on* [insert date and time]. *As a reminder, students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend. Additionally, crisis counselors from KSPHQ will be at* [insert name of school] *throughout the day to provide support to any students in need.*

We appreciate your care and concern as we navigate this loss together. Please know that resources are available for you and/or any of your loved ones who may be struggling at this time. We have attached additional information to this letter. Please reach out to us with any questions, needs, or concerns.

Kindly,

[insert signature]

Voice Message to Families, End of Week 1:
*This script should be read as an Infinite Campus phone message to parents/guardians. *Hello.*

This is [insert name], *Principal at* [insert school].

I want to acknowledge the immense difficulty of this week as our community continues to process and grieve the suicide-loss of a student. In the face of adversity, we have witnessed our students, our teachers and staff, and our parents and guardians display profound strength, resilience, and support. For this, we are extremely grateful.

It's important to us that we keep you informed on all the steps we are taking to support the safety and well-being of our students. We will continue to collaborate with KSPHQ for the remainder of the school year, and will communicate any support plans to you accordingly.

Funeral services for [insert student name] *will take place on* [insert date and time]. *We want to remind you that students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend. Additionally, crisis counselors from KSPHQ will be at* [insert name of school] *throughout the day to provide support to any students in need.*

We appreciate your care and concern as we navigate this loss together. Please know that resources are available for you and/or any of your loved ones who may be struggling at this time. Please check your emails as we have sent along additional information in the form of attachments.

Thank you.

REGARDING A SUSPICIOUS DEATH NOT DECLARED A SUICIDE

Written Correspondence to Families, Day 1:
*This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our students passed away suddenly [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. *Our thoughts and sympathies go out to* [his/her/their] *loved ones.*

All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. *I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them. Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer. You will receive updates regarding our plans to continue supporting students as they are made.*

Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission and pick up, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services.

I have attached a list of school and community resources as well as some tips for talking to your teen about grief and loss.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Take care,

[insert signature]

REGARDING A SUSPICIOUS DEATH NOT DECLARED A SUICIDE

Voice Message to Families, Day 1:
*This script should be read as an Infinite Campus phone message. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

Hello. This is [insert name]*, Principal at* [insert school].

I am delivering this message with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died unexpectedly [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. *Our thoughts and sympathies go out to* [his/her/their] *loved ones.*

All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. *I have sent all parents and guardians a letter which includes the script that was read to students along with valuable resources. This letter has been sent out via email and all students have paper copies to bring home. If you don't have access to this letter, please call us so that we can ensure you have all of the information we've been able to provide.*

Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer. You will receive updates regarding our plans to continue supporting students as they are made.

Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission and pick up, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services.

Please reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

Thank you and take care.

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Guidelines for Supporting Students After a Suicide Loss

Give accurate information about suicide. Suicide is a complicated behavior. Help students understand the complexities.	"Suicide is not caused by a single event such as fighting with parents, or a bad grade, or the breakup of a relationship." "In most cases, suicide is caused by mental health disorders like depression or substance abuse problems. Mental health problems affect the way people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly and rationally. Struggling with your mental health is nothing to be ashamed of." "There are effective treatments to help people who struggle with their mental health. Suicide is preventable."
Address blaming and scapegoating. It is common to try to answer the question "why" by blaming others for the suicide.	"Blaming others for the suicide is wrong, and it's not fair. Doing that can hurt the other person deeply." "Suicide is a very personal decision made in a moment of crisis."

Do not talk about the method. Talking about the method can create images that are upsetting or even traumatizing to individuals. It may also increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable youth.	"Let's focus on talking about the feelings we are left with now and figure out the best way to manage them." "It is normal to have questions about the details of what happened. Sometimes it seems like having more information could help us make sense of why this happened. What we know is that discussing the details can be really harmful, and ultimately having more information tends to leave us with more questions than we started with."

Address anger. Accept expressions of anger at the deceased. Help students know these feelings are normal.	"It is okay to feel angry. These feelings are normal, and it doesn't mean that you didn't care about _____. You can be angry at someone's choices and still care deeply about that person." "It's important that we don't lash out at anyone who is feeling angry. There is no 'right way' to feel right now."
Normalize all feelings and responses. Explain to students that every person grieves differently. Encourage students to accept their own emotions about the event and to accept the emotions and reactions of their peers without judgement.	"Sometimes the feelings and reactions that we have to this kind of loss can feel surprising or unexpected, and that's normal." "We often think our feelings and reactions should 'make sense' but the truth is that we can't make sense of a suicide-loss. We all grieve differently." "There is no 'right way' to feel about this. There is no 'correct' reaction. Grief is messy."

Address feelings of responsibility. Help students understand that the only person responsible for the suicide is the deceased. Reassure those who have exaggerated feelings of responsibility, such as thinking they should have done something to save the deceased or seen the signs.	"This death is not your fault. We cannot always see the signs because we may not know them all or because the suicidal person may hide them very well." "We cannot always predict someone's behavior."
Encourage help-seeking. Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult if they or a friend are feeling depressed or suicidal.	"We are always here to help you through any problem, no matter what. Who are the people you would go to if you or a friend were feeling worried, depressed, or had thoughts of suicide?"

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Immediate Response Protocol
Talking Points for Media Interactions

The staff person responsible for working with the media should prepare a written statement for release to those media representatives who request it. The statement should include:

- A very brief statement acknowledging the death of the student that does NOT include details about the death
- An expression of the school's sympathy to the survivors of the deceased
- Information about the school's postvention policy and program

Sample Statement:

I am very sad to report that [insert name of school] *has lost a student to suicide this week. On behalf of the entire school district, I want to express our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the student's family and friends for this painful loss. Our school is working with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ to provide suicide postvention services and support to students, staff, and families this week and in the weeks to come.*

During this time, we would like to remind the community that help is available. If you or anyone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or feelings, please reach out for assistance. Trained counselors are available 24/7 on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. You do not have to be suicidal to call this number. You can call for any reason, at any time.

All other staff (including school board members) should:

- Refrain from making any comments to or responding to requests from the media
- Refer all requests from the media to the designated person responsible for working with the media

Media representatives should:

- ***Not*** be permitted to conduct interviews on the school grounds
- ***Not*** be allowed to attend parent and student group meetings in order to protect information shared by parents who are concerned about their children
- Be provided with a copy of "Safe Reporting on Suicide: Key Points" from the SPRC.

Guidelines for Monitoring Social Media

While we cannot control what other people say on social media, we can work in partnership with students to identify and monitor the relevant social media sites. By doing so, schools can strategically disseminate information, share prevention-oriented messaging, offer support to students who may be struggling, and identify and respond to students who could be at risk.

When Someone is Placing Blame

It is common for people to place blame as a way of trying to make sense of why this happened. Keep in mind that people who are engaging in this behavior are in a lot of pain, which means it's important to respond with compassion and offer support. Below is a general example of how you might respond:

- *We understand that this loss is incredibly painful, and that it feels like there should be an explanation for why this happened. However, we know that there is never just one cause for suicide and we want to make sure we are spreading accurate information about this topic. Please take a look at these resources for more information and remember that support is available to you at this time.*

When Someone is At-Risk for Suicide

There may be an uptick in suicide risk after a suicide loss. It's important to take all information about students being at-risk for suicide seriously, whether it is coming directly from a student asking for help, a student exhibiting warning signs, or a peer expressing concern for someone else. Be sure to alert the school mental health team so that they can follow up more thoroughly. Below is an example of how you might respond directly on social media:

- *Your safety and well-being is important to us. If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out for support. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or you can call Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ at 785-841-2345. These hotlines are available 24/7 for free and they are confidential. You do not have to be suicidal to call. You can call for any reason at any time.*

For more guidance regarding monitoring social media after a suicide, please review pages 32-36 of After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools .

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Long-Term Response Protocol
Considerations for Long-Term Support

After the first week of crisis response, students will still need a significant amount of support available to them. The long-term support timeline begins the day of the funeral services for the deceased. These suggestions are general and will require adaptation throughout the process.

Day of Funeral Services:

- Crisis counselors should be available at the school throughout the day of the funeral services in the event that some students aren't able to attend or show up to school before/after services.
- School mental health staff should be present at the funeral services for the deceased to support students and staff. They will write down names of people that may require follow-up or additional monitoring throughout the weeks to come.

Addressing Parent Needs:

- Hosting a parent meeting at the school that includes crisis counselors can help the parents feel supported and can increase trust between parents and the school. This is an opportunity for parents to safely express feelings and concerns, ask important questions, and learn about resources that are available to them.
- If at all possible, it is best to not include the family members of the deceased.

Addressing Staff Needs:

- At the end of the first and second weeks of postvention, invite all teachers and staff to a meeting after school where they can receive support from crisis counselors, ask questions, and debrief how things have been going in their classrooms.
- Check in with staff about whether or not they have noticed any particular students who are struggling. This can provide them a sense of relief knowing that these students are being followed-up with and taken care of.
- Ensure that teachers and staff know that there is support available to them at any point throughout the school year and for any reason.

Addressing Student Needs:

- Crisis counselors should be available consistently and frequently for the first two weeks after the event.
    - Inform students each time counselors are present - provide as much notice as possible and provide reminders the day of.
    - Students should be able to meet individually or in small groups as needed. ○ Consult with KSPHQ to respond to any unique needs that may arise.
- After the initial two weeks, the school mental health team will coordinate with KSPHQ to assess the current level of need and determine a plan for tapered support going forward. ● All interactions with students will be reported to the school mental health team to assist with monitoring specific at-risk students.

Communicate the Support Plan

- Ensure that students, staff, and parents are made aware of the plan for tapered support. Communicate any support plan updates accordingly. Setting expectations can bolster a sense of safety and security for the community.

Suicide Postvention Policy:
Long-Term Response Protocol
Considerations for Anniversaries of Crisis Events

As part of the long-term postvention plan, it's important to consider and prepare for anniversaries and other activating occasions related to the death as these often bring up waves of grief and other big emotions for students and staff.

The administrative team will ensure that anniversary dates are represented on a private calendar so that adequate preparation can take place.

Consider preparing for the following:

- The birthday of the person who died
- Holidays and holiday breaks
- Athletic or other events in which the deceased would have participated
- The start of the school year
- Prom
- Graduation

Consider preparing for these events in the following ways:

- Alert staff to the upcoming anniversary or event that may be associated with the deceased
- Educate them that it's possible students and staff might experience emotional reactions and that is normal
- Provide staff with the Talking to Teens About Grief and Loss handout
- Encourage staff to review Jason Flatt training materials regarding recognizing warning signs for suicide and responding appropriately to students who may be at risk or experience severe emotions
- Have grief counselors or mental health professionals on call

Suicide Postvention Policy:
List of Supporting Documents and Resources

The following list of documents and resources are referenced but not included as handouts in this Suicide Response Plan. It is up to the Suicide Response Team to maintain access to and update these resources as needed.

- Calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: What to Expect
  - Kansas Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- Talking to Teens about Grief and Loss
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Supporting Children After Suicide Loss
  - Child Mind Institute
- 10 Ways to Support a Loved One Who Has Lost Someone to Suicide
  - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Safe Reporting on Suicide: Key Points
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

E. Physical Disaster

Checklist for a Crisis Involving a Physical Disaster:

The debriefing of students and staff might not happen immediately because of the need to ensure the physical safety of everyone first.

- ❒ Assess safety of all students and staff.
- ❒ Assemble the Crisis Response Team(CRT) and relieve members of routine responsibilities.
- ❒ Notify Central Office and, thereafter, keep them informed of steps taken.
- ❒ Make an initial determination of the capacity of site staff to respond to the crisis.
- ❒ Determine how to provide relief if staff members are unable to continue with their duties.
- ❒ Determine how to support students in closest physical proximity to the disaster.
- ❒ Determine how to support students who are most affected emotionally.
- ❒ Plan activities for the children until parents/guardians can pick them up.
- ❒ Provide whatever debriefing is necessary for students and staff.
- ❒ Debriefing might occur as early as several hours or several days if unable to return on-site.
- ❒ Notify, in writing, parents/guardians of the school's response to the disaster.
- ❒ Determine what additional support is needed for staff/students to bring closure.
- ❒ Meet daily, and more often, if necessary, as a CRT to provide updates and prioritize needs.

Following a Physical Disaster

Sample Letter to School Community Following a Physical Disaster

(Date)

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you are aware, we have just experienced a **(NAME TYPE OF DISASTER)**. *(Insert specific information regarding how the disaster affected the school site. Give information on the activities the school took if the disaster occurred during school hours. Give information on the physical state of the school if the disaster occurred during non-school hours.)*

A catastrophe like we experienced is frightening to children and adults alike. We will try to return to our normal routine while we provide support to students who may need it. The Crisis Response Team has planned some activities which hopefully will assist our students in coping with their experience during and after the **(NAME THE DISASTER).** *(Spell out what activities will take place and indicate if there is anything a parent or caregiver can do with their child in relationship to the activities.)*

Attached to this letter is some information that might be helpful to you if your child is having difficulty handling the disaster.

If you are concerned about your child's response to this disaster, please feel free to call *(add teacher's, counselor's or some specific person's name)*.

All staff at **(NAME OF SCHOOL)** want to ensure that our students' emotional needs are cared for so that jobs of teaching and learning can resume at the earliest time.

Sincerely,

(Principal's name)

Common Responses to a Physical Crisis

SUCH AS TORNADO OR FIRE

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Fear is a normal reaction to any danger which threatens life or well-being. After a disaster, a person is often afraid of a reoccurrence, injury or death, being separated from family, and being left alone. It is important to remember that emotional needs continue after the immediate physical well being of the family has been established.

ADVICE TO PARENTS

• It is of great importance for the family to remain together.
• The child needs reassurance by the parents/caregiver words as well as their actions.
• Listen to the child's fears and feelings.
• Explain the disaster to the child and answer their questions which may be repeated several times. Reassurance comes with repeated explanations. This is a child's way of trying to gain control which is a healthy sign
• Keep to the family routine as much as possible.
• Parents/caregiver should indicate to the child that they are in control of the situation.
• Parents/caregiver should also be aware of their own fears and uncertainty and of the effect they can have upon a child.
• Children respond to praise, and parents should make a deliberate effort not to focus on any immature behavior which often occurs during or in reaction to a crisis. It is a way a child tries to cope, by returning to the familiar.
• Extra play may be needed to relieve the tension related to the crisis.

• Refusal to go to room or sleep alone;
• Difficulty in falling asleep, waking up during the night, or having nightmares;
• Repeated questions of whether another disaster will occur;
• Regression such as bedwetting, clingingness, thumb sucking;
• Specific fears such as refusal to go to school, fear of the dark or imaginary creatures;
• Symptoms of illness: nausea, loss of appetite, diffuse aches and pains;
• Withdrawal and unwillingness to discuss the disaster;
• Restlessness and change in activity level.

Such behaviors can last several weeks. If any behavior lasts longer, it might be good to ask for professional advice. Contact your physician, religious advisor, or school official for direction for you and professionals to talk with your child.