



Suicide Prevention & Intervention Policy

The CDC reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death among people 10 to 34 years of age in the United States¹. This policy outlines Making Waves Academy’s suicide prevention and intervention procedures to protect the health and well-being of all Making Waves Academy (MWA) students. Please see MWA’s Death Policy (Appendix A) for postvention procedures on how to respond to a student who has died by suicide or other circumstances.

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¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/statistics/>

This policy has been adapted from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Preventing Suicide Toolkit and the Model School District Policy authored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselor Association, The National Association of School Psychologists, and the Trevor Project.

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Suicide Prevention Activities

Below is an outline of the specific suicide prevention activities and trainings for MWA staff, parent/guardians, and students. Additionally, MWA will work to maintain a positive school climate, encourage caring relationships between students and staff members, and provide opportunities for students to learn and practice problem-solving and coping skills in order to promote protective factors that decrease a student's suicide risk.

Staff Professional Development

MWA staff must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting. In addition, treatment of mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide. Staff will receive professional development on risk factors, warning signs, MWA crisis intervention procedures, referrals for mental health services, resources regarding youth suicide prevention and information regarding groups of students judged by MWA, and available research, to be at elevated risk for suicide. See below for a description and target audience for each training.

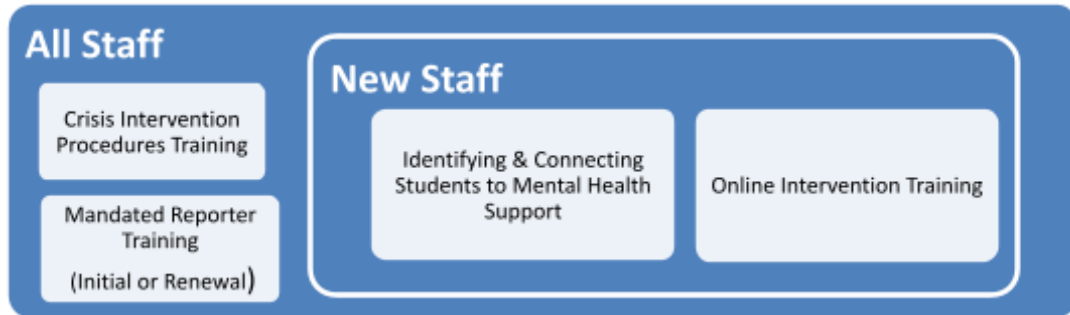
- **Identifying & Connecting Students to Mental Health Support Training** – In-person training led by a mental health professional that reviews warning signs and risk factors for developing mental health disorders, reviews procedures to refer students to mental health services, and provides resources. During this training staff learn the *Notice, Talk, Act* protocol² – noticing the warning signs of mental health problems, speaking with a student directly when there are concerns, and connecting the student to mental health support.
- **Online Intervention Training** -A one-hour, online, interactive simulation gatekeeper training program that teaches educators how to (1) identify students exhibiting signs of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and thoughts of suicide; (2) approach students to discuss their concern; and (3) make a referral to school support services.
- **Crisis Intervention Procedures Training** – Annual in-person training led by a mental health professional that reviews staff protocol for intervening in student crises and referring students to

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<http://www.americanpsychiatricfoundation.org/what-we-do/public-education/typical-or-troubled/about-typical-or-troubled>

support. Risk factors, warning signs, and intervention and referral protocols for the following crises are included in the training: Homelessness/Loss of housing, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse or Assault, Neglect, Pregnancy, Self-Harm, Suicidal Ideation, Violent Threats, and Substance Use.

- **Mandated Reporter Training (Initial)** –Training on the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. The initial training for new staff members reviews in-depth signs of abuse/neglect, the process for reporting neglect and abuse, the support provided to families affected by abuse/neglect, and the legal responsibilities of mandated reporters.
- **Mandated Reporter Training (Renewal)** –Annual training on the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect for returning staff members.



Prevention Programming for Students.

Students will participate in workshops and trainings that will inform them about the warning signs of suicide, symptoms of mental health disorders commonly experienced by adolescents, resources for mental health support, and how to access mental health services at MWA and in the community. Any workshops or trainings shall not use the stress model to explain suicide. See below for a description and target audience for each prevention activity.

- **Mental Health Support Presentation** – Annual twenty-minute presentation to orient students to mental health support available at MWA.
- **Poster Outreach** - Visual campaign reminding students of the reasons to seek out mental health support and the available mental health resources at MWA.
- **List of Support Hotlines** – A list of support hotlines will be included in all student planners and on the back of student IDs.
- **Depression Awareness Curriculum** – Two 45-minute sessions that reviews signs of depression, stigma around mental health disorders, and teaches students ways to improve mental wellness. These themes are also addressed in health and science classes across the academy.
- **Peer Support Online Training** – A 25-minute, online, interactive training program for high school students. During the training, users assume the role of a high school student concerned about a friend and engage in a simulated conversation with this friend. Users learn and practice effective conversation strategies for broaching the topic of psychological distress, motivating the peer to seek help, and avoiding pitfalls, such as giving unsolicited advice and criticizing.
- **Mental Health Awareness Month** – An annual event promoting mental wellness and educating students about mental health and ways to find support.

Support Services for High-Risk Students.

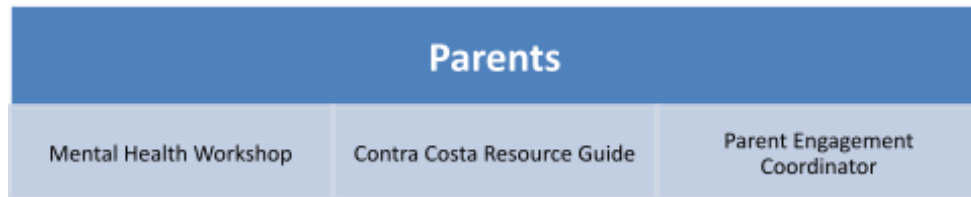
In order to be responsive to the needs of high-risk students, MWA will provide the following services as needed:

High-Risk Students	Services Offered
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Youth bereaved by suicide● Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders● Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care● LGBTQI youth● Youth experiencing traumatic stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Case management● Critical incident debriefings● Grief support groups● Group therapy● Individual therapy● Referrals for external support

Training and Resources for Parents/Guardians

MWA will offer the following training and resources to parents/guardians. Parents will be notified of these resources by MWA's sharing this policy.

- **Mental Health Workshop** – In-person training that reviews risk factors, warning signs, resources for support, and how to refer students for mental health support.
- **Contra Costa Resource Guide** – This guide of local resources includes contact information for mental health agencies and other supports. This guide will be disseminated throughout the year at parent workshops and will be included in family mailings.
- **Parent/Guardian Engagement Coordinator** – This staff member will act as a liaison between the school and parents and provide pertinent resources to parents regarding key concerns (including mental health).



Risk Factors and Protective Factors

Risk factors for suicide are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take her or his life. Suicide risk tends to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time.

The most frequently cited risk factors for suicide are:

- Major depression (feeling down in a way that impacts your daily life) or bipolar disorder (severe mood swings)
- Problems with alcohol or drugs
- Unusual thoughts and behavior or confusion about reality
- Personality traits that create a pattern of intense, unstable relationships or trouble with the law
- Impulsivity and aggression, especially along with a mental disorder
- Previous suicide attempt or family history of a suicide attempt or mental disorder
- Serious medical condition and/or pain

It is important to bear in mind that the large majority of people with mental disorders or other suicide risk factors do not engage in suicidal behavior.

Protective factors for suicide are characteristics or conditions that may help to decrease a person's suicide risk. While these factors do not eliminate the possibility of suicide, especially in someone with risk factors, they may help to reduce that risk. Protective factors for suicide have not been studied as thoroughly as risk factors, so less is known about them.

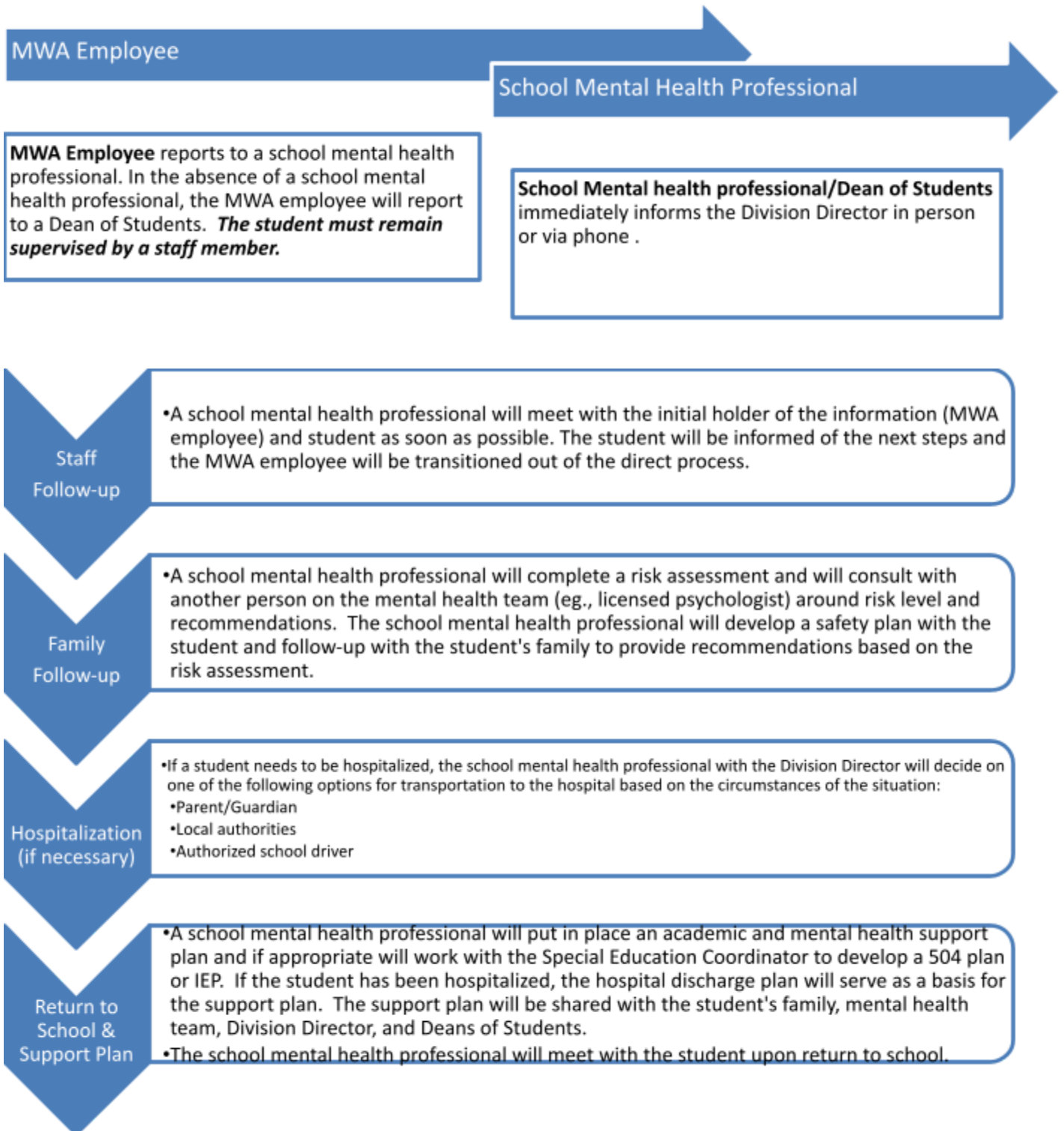
Protective factors for suicide include:

- Receiving effective mental health care
- Positive connections to family, peers, community, and social institutions such as marriage and religion that foster resilience
- The skills and ability to solve problems

Note that protective factors do not entirely remove risk, especially when there is a personal or family history of depression or other mental disorders.

Assessment and Referral

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal (e.g., verbal suicidal ideation, exhibits self-harm behaviors), MWA staff members will follow the protocol outlined below:



In-School Suicide Attempts

If a student attempts suicide while at school, MWA will employ its emergency procedures to support the health and safety of the student:

- The first staff member on-site will call 911, contact other staff members for immediate support and call the front office. The student will remain under adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene. Other students will be removed from the scene.
- The front office will notify the Division Director, Dean(s), and school mental health professionals. First aid will be administered to the student until medical professionals arrive.
- If appropriate and in the best interest of the student, the front office staff will contact the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.
- The school mental health professional will recommend a risk assessment and psychiatric hospitalization to ensure the safety of the student.
- Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.

Out-Of-School Suicide Attempts

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt or a student expresses suicidal ideation while off-campus, the staff member will:

- Call 911.
- Attempt to continue to engage the student verbally (if speaking over the phone).
- Inform the student's parent/guardian. Discuss with the family how they would like MWA to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students. Obtain permission from the parent/guardian to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis are correct.
- Inform the Division Director and school mental health professionals, who will determine appropriate support for affected students for a minimum of 6 weeks after attempt.

Re-Entry Procedures

Before a student returns to Making Waves Academy ("School") following a medical or psychiatric hospitalization, the Assistant Principal/Dean(s) and school mental health professional(s) will meet with the student's parent/guardian and the student to discuss the process for re-entry and the student's readiness to return to School. The school will follow the Post-Hospitalization Procedures.

Student Identification Cards

MWA will include the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on all student identification cards. MWA will also include the number for the Crisis Text Line and a local suicide prevention hotline on all student identification cards.



Appendix A

Death Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline postvention procedures to support students and staff in response to the death of a Making Waves Academy student and/or employee (current and former). A person is considered a student of Making Waves Academy while he/she is enrolled at the Academy through the summer after graduating from Making Waves Academy, at which point he/she becomes a participant in Making Waves' College Alumni Program.

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Initial Notification

In the event of a death of a student and/or employee, the initial holder of information will follow the chain of notification outlined below to inform the **Crisis Response Lead**. If the first person on the list is unavailable, the holder of information will proceed to contact the next staff member in the chain.

1. MWA CEO or designee (e.g., Chief of Staff)
2. MWA Division Director (division the student is enrolled)
3. MWA Board President

After receiving the notification and confirming the student's or employee's cause of death, the **Crisis Response Lead** will immediately convene a meeting with the **Crisis Response Team** to develop a response plan.

Crisis Response

The **Crisis Response Team (CRT)** will consist of the following individuals who will plan and lead the crisis response at MWA.

- o CEO
- o Division Directors
- o Associate Division Directors
- o Division Directors of Curriculum & Instruction
- o Director of College & Career Counseling
- o Social Worker
- o Division Deans
- o Operations Director
- o Chief of Staff
- o Licensed Mental Health Professionals (consult as needed)

Following the news of a student's or employee's death, the **CRT** will convene immediately to assign responsibilities and develop a response plan as guided by the steps below. The **CRT** should take action on each task listed on the **Crisis Response Task List** (p. 4) within 24 hours of the initial **CRT** meeting. **The CEO (or MWA Board Chair if CEO is unavailable) in consultation with the Division Directors will make the final decisions on any actions taken by the CRT.**

The **CRT** should deliberate next step actions and responses keeping in mind that they are expected to communicate with the following key community stakeholders in an appropriate and timely manner:

- Family of the deceased
- MWA Faculty, Staff, and Administration
- Parent Body
- Student Body
- MWA Board of Directors
- Making Waves Foundation Leadership

Upon arriving at next steps, the **CRT** should use the following order to guide communication. Please see p. 6 of the Appendix for *Communication and Support Guidelines*:

- **Contact the family of the deceased.** One to two members of the **CRT** should contact the family and visit the family in-person, if appropriate. The **CRT** should:
 - Offer condolences from MWA.
 - Inquire about funeral arrangements, and ask if the funeral will be private or if the family will allow students and staff to attend.
 - Ask the family if they are aware of any students or staff members who may be especially upset following the death.
 - Provide the family with information about grief counseling.
 - Ask the family if they would like the personal belongings of the deceased that are in possession of MWA, if any.
 - Briefly explain to the family what the school is doing to respond to the death.
- **Share information.** *See the Appendix for sample statements to staff and students.*
 - Immediately notify staff of the death through e-mail or by phone. Schedule an all-staff meeting as soon as possible.
 - Write a statement for staff members to share with students in small groups (e.g., homerooms or advisories).
 - Send home a notification letter to parents.
 - Provide talking points and scripts for staff members to address inquiries from students and parents.
- **Monitor student reactions.** Communicate with staff how they can identify students' who are most likely to be significantly affected by the death and review how to refer them to mental health support. Monitor social media for concerning statements, and encourage students to notify staff if they have concerns for other students.
- **Initiate support services.** Students referred to mental health support will be assessed for the level of support needed. The MWA social worker and contracted mental health professionals will provide individual and small group counseling as needed, in addition to a Critical Incident Debriefing with staff members. If the death happens while the student and/or employee is with students or other staff members, there will be a critical incident debriefing specifically for those students and staff members.
- **Funerals and Memorials.** MWA must balance students' need to grieve with maintaining school routines.
 - It is recommended that funeral or memorial services are not held on MWA school grounds, to enable MWA to focus on maintaining its regular schedule, structure, and routine. If a funeral service is held during school hours, students will be permitted to leave school (with parent permission) to attend the service.
 - Spontaneous memorials/vigils initiated by MWA students or parents are allowed on MWA school grounds with approval from the MWA CEO or designee. When spontaneous memorials are created on MWA school grounds, the memorial can be left in place until after the funeral (or up to 5 days) after which the objects may be offered to the family. MWA will monitor key areas where memorials may show up (eg., lockers, classrooms, desks, where the death occurred if it happened on-campus).
 - MWA can choose how to acknowledge and remember the student and/or employee's death.
 - MWA allows employee-initiated support and donations to the family of the deceased.
- **External Communication.** The CEO or designee will be the sole media spokesperson.

Assembly Bill 2246 requires that all California local education agencies serving grades 7th-12th adopt a pupil suicide prevention policy before the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

This policy has been adapted from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Preventing Suicide Toolkit and the Model School District Policy authored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselor Association, The National Association of School Psychologists, and the Trevor Project.

- o The media spokesperson will prepare a written statement for the media acknowledging the death (no details about the death), an expression of the school's sympathy, and information about the school's crisis response policy and program.
- o All other staff should refrain from making any comments to the media, and refer all requests from the media to the spokesperson.
- o Media representatives will not be permitted to conduct interviews on school grounds and will not be allowed to attend parent and student group meetings.

Appendix

Crisis Response Task List

After the Crisis Response Lead has verified the student and/or employee's death, he/she will convene a meeting with the **Crisis Response Team** to share information and assign the following tasks. Each task below should be addressed within 24 hours of the initial **CRT** meeting.

Task	Staff Responsible
Gather Information	
Gather the facts surrounding the death so that messages contain objective, substantiated facts versus conjecture or hearsay	
Contact and coordinate with external/internal mental health professionals	
Reach out to and work with the family of the deceased	
Consult and share information with MWA governance designee and MWF leadership designee	
Notify School Community	
Notify all faculty and staff	
Provide staff and faculty with talking points to address students and families	
Notify students	
Notify families of students about the death and the school's response	
Notify MWA Board of Directors and potentially MWA's charter authorizer	
Support Students & Staff	
Identify, monitor, and support students who may be at risk	
Participate in and/or advise on appropriate memorialization	
Manage & Monitor Communication	
Work with the press/media	
Monitor social media	
CRT member who will ensure next steps have been taken and will communicate updates to CRT	

Communication & Support Guidelines

The chart below outlines options for notifying community members, providing support for community members, and providing support for the family of the deceased. The first row in each section outlines the minimal actions needed. The following points should be considered when selecting notification and support options:

- *Is the student a former, current, or an alumnus of MWA?*
- *Is the staff member a current or former staff member?*
- *Did the death happen while school was in session? During a break?*

Notification

E-mail notification to staff

In-person notification to students impacted

Letter notification to families

In-person notification to staff

In-person notification to student body

Letter notification to families

Support for MWA Community

Advisory/Homeroom grief circles for students impacted

Grief group sessions for students

Critical Incident Debriefing for staff

Long-term grief groups for students

Individual therapy for students

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) referral for staff

Support for Family of the Deceased

Contact family to give condolences

Share funeral information to MWA community (w/ permission from family)

Referral for grief counseling

Send card/flowers to the family

Collect staff contributions

Sample Death Notification Statements for Students

Option 1 – When the Death Has Been Ruled A Suicide

- *It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has taken [his/her] own life. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.*
- *A suicide death presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors you may hear. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.*
- *Suicide is a very complicated act. It is usually caused by a mental disorder such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes these disorders are not identified or noticed; in other cases, a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs. One thing is certain: there are treatments that can help. Suicide should never, ever be an option.*
- *Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction.*
- *We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss and to enable us to understand more about suicide. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know. Please remember that we are all here for you.*

Option 2 – When the Cause Of Death Has Been Confirmed, But Is Not a Suicide

- *It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died from/by _____. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.*
- *Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.*
- *Please remember that we are all here for you.*

Option 3 – When the Cause of Death Is Unconfirmed

- *It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.*
- *The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to _____ as well as [his/her] family and friends. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.*
- *Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having*

difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.

- *Please remember that we are all here for you.*

Option 4 – When the Family Has Requested That the Cause Of Death Not Be Disclosed

- *It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.*
- *The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time.*
- *We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to _____ as well as [his/her] family and friends.*
- *Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.*
- *Please remember that we are all here for you.*

Sample Death Notification Statements for Families

Option 1 – When the Death Has Been Ruled a Suicide

- *I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*
- *All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.*
- *The cause of death was suicide. We want to take this opportunity to remind our community that suicide is a very complicated act. It is usually caused by a mental disorder such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes these disorders are not identified or noticed; other times, a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs. I am including some information that may be helpful to you in discussing suicide with your child.*
- *Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the MWA office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of school and community mental health resources.*
- *Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.*
- *The school will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location]. Members of our Crisis Response Team [or mental health professionals] will be present to provide information about common reactions following a suicide and how adults can help youths cope. They will also provide information about suicide and mental illness in adolescents, including risk factors and warning signs of suicide, and will address attendees' questions and concerns.*
- *Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the school counselors with any questions or concerns.*

Option 2 - When the Cause of Death Has Been Confirmed, but Is Not a Suicide

- *I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died by/from _____. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*
- *All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.*
- *Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the school office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of school and community mental health resources.*
- *Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.*
- *Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of MWA counselors with any questions or concerns.*

Option 3 – When the Cause of Death Is Unconfirmed

- *I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*
- *All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.*
- *The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we have asked the students not to spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply*

hurtful and unfair to _____ as well as [his/her] family and friends. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.

- *Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the MWA office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of school and community mental health resources.*
- *Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.*
- *Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the MWA counselors with any questions or concerns.*

Option 4 – When the Family Has Requested That The Cause Of Death Not Be Disclosed

- *I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our <students, staff members>, _____, has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*
- *All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.*
- *The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time. We are aware that there have been rumors that this was a suicide death. We ask for the community's support with preventing the spread of rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to _____ as well as [his/her] family and friends. Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the MWA office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of additional school and community mental health resources.*
- *Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school. Please do not hesitate to contact me or MWA counselors with any questions or concerns.*

Sample Media Statement

To be provided to local media outlets either upon request or proactively.

- *School personnel were informed by the coroner's office that a <student, staff member>, at [_____] school has died. The cause of death was _____.*
- *Our thoughts and support go out to [his/her] family and friends at this difficult time.*
- *MWA will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location]. Members of MWA's Crisis Response Team [or mental health professionals] will be present to provide information about common reactions following a death and how adults can help youths cope. A meeting announcement has been sent to parents, who can contact school administrators or counselors at [number] or [e-mail address] for more information.*
- *Trained crisis counselors will be available to meet with students and staff starting tomorrow and continuing over the next few weeks as needed.*

Response Guidelines for Front Office Staff Members

These guidelines provide directives for staff members responding to phone calls during the early stages of the crisis.

- **Police or other security professionals**—Immediate transfer to the Division Director.

- **Family members of deceased**—Immediate transfer to Division Director or anyone else they want to reach at MWA. If Division Director is not available immediately, ask if they would like to speak with a school mental health professional.
- **School staff members**—Give out basic information on death (e.g., student/employee’s name, date of death, and cause—if known and the family wants this information disclosed) and scheduling logistics for all-staff meeting. A script will be provided in the event of a crisis.
- **Parents regarding their student’s immediate safety**—Reassure parents if you know their student was not involved and outline how students are being served and supported. If child may have been involved, transfer to a Crisis Response Team member who may have more information. A script will be provided in the event of a crisis.
- **Persons who call with information about others at risk**—Take down information and get it to a CRT member. Take a phone number where the person can be called back by a CRT member.
- **Media**—Take messages and refer to CEO or designee. Do not provide any information to the media.
- **Parents generally wanting to know how to respond**—Explain that children and staff are being supported, review the list of On-campus Resources for Students (p.) and information around counseling support groups that are being offered at school. A pared down version of the death notification statement will be provided in the event of a crisis.
- **Where to send parents who arrive unannounced on the scene**—Set aside a space for parents to wait and get information. 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 child and when.
- **Non-crisis related calls** - Take messages and deliver to appropriate staff members.

Talking Points for Faculty & Staff

Please follow these strict guidelines in addressing expressed student concerns about student or staff members' deaths in the MWA community. These guidelines are meant to support and protect all stakeholders within the MWA community – students, faculty/staff/admin, and the deceased's family – including parents/guardians, siblings, and extended family.

Framework for Responses	Response Examples
<p>1. Validate student's feelings <i>Accept expressions of anger, responsibility, and sadness. Help students know these feelings are normal.</i></p>	<p>"It is okay to feel angry/sad. These feelings are a normal part of the grieving process."</p>
<p>2. Reiterate expectations <i>After validating the feelings insure the classroom and campus remains a safe space by reiterating the expectation that it's not appropriate for us to discuss certain topics in certain ways in order to support everyone in their grief process.</i></p>	<p>"Let's remember our values of responsibility and respect in this community – we are responsible for keeping ourselves and others safe by notifying staff members if there's a rumor/problem/concern. It's also important to respect others' privacy by refusing to spread rumors amongst our peers."</p>
<p>3. Encourage help-seeking <i>Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult if they think they need help or a friend needs help.</i></p>	<p>"It sounds like you have a lot on your mind, and you're still trying to understand what happened. Have you considered talking to a counselor? Having a confidential space to express your emotions can be helpful; I can introduce you to her."</p> <p>"We are always here to help you through any problem, no matter what."</p>
<p>4. Maintain normal routine <i>Having a routine provides some certainty and comfort which is often temporarily lost when any traumatic event occurs. Maintaining routine will also help to minimize students excessively engaging in discussion around suicide which may increase distress.</i></p>	<p>"It may be hard to focus right now but one of the things we know is that maintaining a normal routine can help us all through this difficult time."</p>

Specific Scenarios	Responses
<p>Student asks about the method of the death</p>	<p>"There are different stories about how ____ died, and that can be confusing. Out of respect for the family's privacy, let's focus on _____ contribution to the community. How can we exhibit those characteristics in our day to day activities?"</p>
<p>Staff overhears students talking about the death</p>	<p>"I know that it can be difficult not to talk about events like this with one another. To make sure that you have confidential space to express yourself, I encourage you to speak with a counselor."</p>

On-Campus Resources for Students

Please mention and remind students of the following socio-emotional support resources on campus.

- **Brain and Psychology Club** – attend meetings or informational events sponsored by the club to learn more about different illnesses, how the brain works, and resources available for you or a friend.
- **Advisory** – We will have explicit lessons this year that provide psychology education and some background on various things to be aware of with respect to your general well-being and drug and alcohol use.
- **Groups** – groups will meet at lunch to discuss a variety of topics – including reactions to the death and other issues you may have on your mind.
- **A counselor** – who is available to talk through with you some of your feelings, help you develop a personal plan for yourself, as well as provide referrals to resources in the community
- **A Trusted Teacher or Advisor** – you can check in with your advisor or a trusted teacher to discuss how you are feeling and receive some general support, and they can help you think through next steps to get support

Resources for Staff

Below are socio-emotional support resources available to staff members.

- **Critical Incident Debriefing** – Staff members will have the opportunity to participate in a group led by mental health professionals to talk about their experience, how it has affected them, brainstorm coping mechanisms, identify individuals at risk, and share community resources.
- **Employee Assistance Program** – Through MWA's health benefits, staff members have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) to help employees manage problems (e.g., grief) that may adversely impact their well-being.