

Suicide and Death

Threat of suicide in the school

Any note or threat of suicide should be taken seriously. Contact the Principal and Guidance Counselor immediately.

- If a Guidance Counselor is available, he or she should evaluate the situation and request services as needed.
- If a Guidance Counselor is not available, contact the Principal or parent to determine if evaluation or medical assistance is needed immediately.
- Contact the local suicide crisis line. Phone number: _____

Suicide or death outside of school

- Contact the Principal and the Diocesan Director of Schools.
- The Principal will implement the Crisis Assistance Team (if one exists).

Suicide or death in the school

- The Principal will call 911.
- The Principal will contact the Student Coordinator and the Guidance Counselor.
- Implement the Crisis Assistance Team (if one exists).

School procedure after a death occurs

First day

- Begin and end the day with a faculty meeting.
- Assign roles.
- Set up the faculty work room as a crisis center.
- Have the Student Coordinator and designees explain facts to students.
- Have the Guidance Counselor visit each of the decedent's classes.
- Gather the decedent's personal property to be returned later.
- Provide individual interventions.
- Notify community support agencies if needed.

Second day

- Begin with a faculty meeting to review the situation, including feelings of students and staff. Stress normalizing the routine as much as possible. Review procedures for excused absences and discuss questions regarding a memorial service and the funeral.
- Continue faculty work room crisis center support.
- If possible, schedule an in-service meeting for the staff to review skills for working through grief and, if the death was a suicide, review risk factors, how to diffuse and alleviate guilt, and how to respond to questions and feelings about suicide.
- Review or provide a list of crisis services and phone numbers for referral to parents or students.

Third day

- Have the Principal and Crisis Team meet.
- Provide a written announcement to be read by staff concerning funeral arrangements. Make faculty aware of the details so they can answer student questions that may arise.
- Ask that the Principal or a chosen staff member visit or communicate expressions of sympathy to the family.
- Monitor “at risk” students and, if appropriate, begin referrals for continued support.
- If the death resulted in a high level of community awareness or media coverage, schedule an evening meeting to answer questions.

Follow-up

- Arrange for the return of the decedent’s personal property to the family.
- Remind faculty to be aware that students may question the spiritual aspects of death.
- Provide a list of emergency agencies and phone numbers to the parents of the student body.
- Schedule a staff meeting to discuss the interventions that took place and to remind people to continue to monitor the behavior of students.