

# SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH RESPONSE

## Initial Reporting Person

Notify the Building Administrator

## Principal or Head of Building Crisis Response Team

1. Verify information
2. Notify Central Office by calling the following numbers until contact is made:  
  
Dr. William Klaus, Work ..... 852-3006  
Dr. William Klaus, Home .....  
Dr. Tony Beardsley, Work ..... 852-3061  
Dr. Tony Beardsley, Home .....
3. Call meeting of the Building Crisis Response Team (include one Central Office Administrator)
4. Check with the police to determine accurate information
5. Check with the family to determine
  - a. Name of building(s) that siblings attend and affiliations, teams, extra curricular activities that may need additional support
  - b. An alternate emergency family contact and/or a family spokesperson
6. Meet with the Building Crisis Response Team

**Notes:** Students and staff need to feel that someone is in charge and has things under control

School personnel should stay in charge of school decisions -  
Work with the family, but do not give them control over school decisions

Do not allow parents to come to school to grieve

Memorials should be directed to general school fund or specialized agencies that deal with suicide prevention

## Building Crisis Response Team - Immediate Considerations

1. Team members will determine impact of the death or injury on the building and determine an appropriate level of response
2. Determine appropriate role of school personnel
3. Add other people to team as needed: teachers, coaches, counselors, social workers, psychologists, clergy, or appropriate outsiders
4. Consider calling all staff via telephone tree - for grade schools, call all families of students who had the teacher/student(s) in class
5. Develop draft announcement(s) to notify staff and students of the incident
  - a. Notify staff first if possible
  - b. Notify students and/or staff in the most appropriate manner (e.g. phone calls, a class by class announcement, a written note to teachers).
6. Develop a plan for the Superintendent to respond to and/or notify media

## Building Crisis Response Team - As Soon As Appropriate

1. Meet with building staff before students arrive (if possible):
  - a. Make a straightforward statement of facts
  - b. Release only information approved by police and deemed appropriate by the Building Crisis Response Team about the cause, circumstances, and/or time of death or injury
  - c. Review information
  - d. If appropriate, review and modify plan
  - e. Develop a list of most affected/high risk students and/or staff members and a plan to support them (use 3X5 cards, a form, and/or individual face-to-face visits to identify them)
  - f. Review and modify announcement to students
  - g. Allow time for questions
  
2. Inform students (and staff if prior meeting is not possible):
  - a. Make a straightforward announcement of the incident
  - b. Make a simple statement of sympathy and/or condolences to the family
  - c. Release only information approved by police and deemed appropriate by the Building Crisis Response Team about the cause, circumstances, and/or time of death or injury
  - d. Notify siblings (only as directed by family) - also notify Head of Building Crisis Response Team of those buildings
  
3. Continue school day with as normal a schedule as possible:
  - a. Do not dismiss school or cancel classes (usually students need normal patterns and support available at school)
  - b. Follow normal attendance procedures
  - c. Allow students to leave school only after contacting parent(s) and stating specific reasons for concern
  - d. Follow normal activity schedule holding after school, evening, and weekend events.
  - e. Do not schedule an assembly at all (assemblies tend to intensify emotions)
  - f. Do not put the flag at half staff - only the Governor or President can order the flag at half staff
  
4. Determine which staff and/or activities will need extra support:
  - a. Assign additional staff and phone lines to handle calls
  - b. Provide appropriate training and information for person(s) assigned to answer the telephone
  - c. Arrange for substitutes if needed - consider bringing in a few floating subs to take over where and when needed
  - d. Consider putting an aide in the class to assist a teacher who is strongly impacted by the situation
  - e. Consider hiring extra clerical support to catch up and/or keep up

5. Write letter to parents to send home with all students regarding the incident (if appropriate)
6. Notify parents of seriously distraught students - inform them of reactions they might expect and ways they can secure help
7. Central Office shall notify all district sites via E-mail of the facts (provide name of the victim)
8. Direct a staff member to remove student's and parent's or staff member's name(s) from all class lists and school mailing lists, including those at Central Office (i.e., census, the Computer Center, the sub-finder list) and companies providing pictures, graduation items, etc.
9. Notify Student Transit, if appropriate
10. Hold and/or cancel all library fine notices, report cards, and other notices to the victim and his/her family
11. Have two staff members remove contents from victim's locker and/or desk and secure in office until turned over to parents (determine if student is using other lockers, etc.)
12. Establish counseling centers for students:
  - a. Consider calling in a grief consultant
  - b. Ask each teacher if he/she would like to discuss the incident themselves with their students and offer assistance in this area
  - c. Assign a pupil service team member to follow the victims schedule to assist with processing of event
  - d. Screen for students that were most affected/high-risk
  - e. Develop a plan to support most affected/high risk individuals
  - f. Plan support services for the Building Crisis Response Team
13. Establish a drop-in counseling center for staff and parents
14. In the event of a suicide, or attempted suicide, plan prevention activities to discourage a "cluster" response:
  - a. Emphasize that suicide is never a good choice
  - b. Explain where and from whom help is available
  - c. Utilize counseling and Student Assistance Program options as appropriate
  - d. Inform students/staff/parents of the suicide hotline resource
  - e. Advise suicide hotline staff of the incident
15. Invite the doctor, medical examiner, or other involved community professionals who provided services during the crisis to present information, answer questions, and give support to staff and/or students (small groups not assembly)

16. Hold another Building Crisis Response Team meeting (perhaps mid-day and/or at the end of school day) and a staff meeting at the end of the day:
  - a. Review events
  - b. Assess the activities to this point and revise and/or expand plan as necessary
  - c. Review status of most affected/high risk students as appropriate
  - d. Answer questions and share feelings
  - e. Provide opportunity for discussion
  - f. Ask staff to turn in a list of additional students and/or staff who are likely to need support

### Building Crisis Response Team - During the Aftermath

1. Deal with the "empty desk" with sensitivity
2. Redo all class seating charts as soon as possible for the benefit of substitute teachers
3. Visit parents (when appropriate) and express condolences to the family
4. Follow district building use policies regarding non-religious memorial services, religious services, etc.
5. Designate a staff member to collect funeral and/or visitation information
6. Determine the role students or faculty should play and religious traditions that apply
7. Inform students/staff regarding funeral/visitation arrangements:
  - a. Advise students to honor the wishes of the parents of the student in relation to attendance at visitations, memorial services, and funeral.
  - b. Inform students/staff of cultural issues
  - c. Excuse only those students from classes who have permission from their parent(s) to attend the funeral
  - d. Provide a lesson for students on appropriate behavior at visitation and/or funeral
8. Set up a schedule of staff volunteers to be present at the visitation and/or funeral and utilize Central Office personnel, if necessary:
  - a. Identify most affected/high risk students and staff at these activities.
  - b. Encourage appropriate behavior
  - c. Provide support
9. Inform other buildings and district staff of funeral/visitation arrangements via E-mail as appropriate
10. Reconvene the Building Crisis Response Team after five to ten days and at the end of one month to:
  - a. Debrief and process
  - b. Identify past issues that may resurface
  - c. Make suggestions to improve the process
  - d. Provide support to Building Crisis Response Team members
  - e. Assess status of students, staff, etc.
  - f. Determine plans to handle legal or court related activities
  - g. Decide how to handle upcoming events such as a tournament, graduation, etc.
  - h. Make plans for long term support where needed
  - i. Plan activities to provide staff opportunities to support each other and process the events
  - j. Memorial(s) should be directed to general school scholarship fund or specialized agencies that deal with suicide prevention

- k. Establish a plan to slowly and in stages retire memorials, desk, etc.
- l. Consider a closing event such as a blood drive, tree planting, etc.
- m. Double check that student or staff member has been removed from all lists, etc.
- f. Re-contact parents - give them things not sent previously - Use this as an opportunity to provide support to them

**Notes:** Remember students need adults to model the grieving process

Anniversary dates of the event may cause concerns as long as students and/or staff who were present at the original event remain in the building

Students re-grieve at each developmental stage

**STAGES OF GRIEF \***

Shock/Denial  
 Anger  
 Acceptance  
 Recovery  
 Reintegration

\*Stages are not discrete/separate entities and can recur or occur in any sequence

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH*</b>	
<b>AGES</b>	<b>LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING</b>
0-2	Separation
3 - 5	Reversible
6 - 9	Acceptance of death as final
10-12	Realize all die - begin to fear death
12+	Recognize concept of biological clock
*Ages may vary depending on child and cognitive ability	

# SUICIDE ACUTE RISK AND NON-ACUTE RISK

## Introduction

The process presented in this section covers intervention only. This process does not cover prevention or post-prevention, although both are critical components of a complete plan to deal with these issues. Post-prevention is covered in the section of the crisis plan titled, "Death of a Student." Prevention plans are part of building, the pupil services, student services, and AOD prevention, health, and other school programs.

Unfortunately, a number of students will have suicidal thoughts during their school careers. Although these thoughts are usually not acted upon, every encounter with suicidal ideation must be evaluated. On occasion, a student is encountered who is an acute suicidal risk. We must be prepared to respond to both types of situations.

## Instructions

1. Have a staff member bring the student to the office to be interviewed by one or two team members
  - a. Interviewer is looking for 6 danger signs
    1. Suicide threat
    2. Statements indicating a desire or intent to die
    3. Previous suicide attempt
    4. Marked changes in behavior or personality
    5. Signs of depression
    6. Making final arrangements
  - b. When assessing the level of a suicide threat these factors should be considered:
    1. Specificity of plan
      - The more detailed the plan, the higher the risk
    2. Availability of method
      - If the student has access to a method (i.e., guns, pill, etc), the risk is higher
    3. Lethality of method
      - Access to a gun is more lethal than access to a few pills
      - Access to a large supply of medications is of more concern than availability of aspirin
      - Males are more likely to use guns - females, pills
    4. Willingness to contact someone if suicidal thoughts persist
      - If a student will promise to call one of several people if thoughts reoccur, the risk is decreased
    5. History of prior attempts
      - If the student has previously attempted, the risk is higher

2. Acute risk of suicide

- a. Keep the student with a responsible adult at all times until he/she is released to authorities, another professional, or parents
  - If the student leaves, call 911 immediately
- b. Call Police first (839-4972 or 911 after hours) or contact Human Services (831-5700) and ask for "Family Intake".
- c. Notify Building Administrator
- d. Notify parents (after authorities)
  - Parents may not follow through with treatment and the child may complete suicide as a result
  - Parents may be more difficult to locate
- e. Seek input from at least one other student services professional, if possible
  - Two heads are better than one
  - Liability is reduced as policy is followed
- f. Communicate information on a need to know basis
- g. Ask parents to come to the school or to the location to which the student has been taken by authorities.
- h. Refer student to appropriate support groups
  - Develop a prevention/intervention plan with community service provider
  - Establish a process to ensure the plan is being followed
  - Maintain a record of contacts
  - Develop a check in plan with a concerned appropriate school staff person for 3-6 months
- i. Make follow-up contacts periodically with the professionals to whom you referred the student and parent
- j. Contact the student periodically to express interest, concern, and acceptance of him/her as a person
- k. Document all actions and events in writing and keep the documentation

3. If the level of risk is not acute

- a. Do not leave the student alone
- b. Contact building administration
- c. Contact another student service professional and confirm level of risk
- d. Contact parent/guardian
- e. Refer parent and student to appropriate mental health services
  - Obtain a release of information if parents ask you to make the referral
- f. Personally report the incident to Human Services (831-5700) or Intake (839-6195)
- g. Make follow-up contacts to the student and parent
  - Develop a prevention/intervention plan with community service provider
  - Establish a process to ensure the plan is being followed
  - Maintain a record of contacts
  - Develop a check in plan with a concerned appropriate school staff person for 3-6 months
- h. Periodically check in with student to express interest, concern, and acceptance of him/her as a person

- i. Document all actions and events in writing and keep the documentation
4. If a suicide occurs
    - a. Talk with other professionals about your feelings and concerns
    - b. Follow instructions under “Serious Injury or Death of a Student” in this material

## LEARN TO RECOGNIZE SUICIDE DANGER SIGNS

Suicide doesn't happen "out of the blue" – That's why it's important to be alert to clues that someone may be considering suicide. Clues may include:

<p><b>A PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPT</b> A significant number of young people who commit suicide have attempted suicide before</p>	<p><b>VERBAL THREATS</b> Statements such as: "You'd be better off without me" or "I wish I were dead" should always be taken seriously</p>	<p><b>CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR</b> Normally active people may become withdrawn; cautious individuals may start taking unusual risks</p>	<p><b>SUBSTANCE ABUSE</b> Alcohol and other drug abuse appear to be significantly linked to suicide attempts among young people</p>	<p><b>UNUSUAL PURCHASES</b> If the person buys a weapon, rope, or any item that arouses your suspicion, talk openly with the person about it</p>	<p><b>GIVING AWAY POSSESSIONS</b> Someone who has decided to commit suicide may give away personal possessions – CD's, favorite articles of clothing, etc.</p>
<p><b>SIGNS OF DEPRESSION</b> May include changes in eating and sleeping habits, anxiety, restlessness, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness and guilt, and loss of interest in usual activities</p>	<p><b>PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL</b> A dramatic drop in grades, falling asleep in class, emotional outbursts, or any other behavior that's uncharacteristic of a particular student may be cause for concern</p>	<p><b>THEMES OF DEATH</b> A desire to end one's life may show up in the person's artwork, poetry, essays, etc.</p>	<p><b>SUDDEN UNEXPECTED HAPPINESS</b> Sudden happiness following prolonged depression may indicate that the person is profoundly relieved because he or she has finally made a decision - a decision to commit suicide</p>	<p><b>OTHER SIGNS</b> These may include physical complaints, frequent accidents, hyperactivity, aggressiveness, sexual promiscuity, attention-getting behavior, prolonged grief after a loss, or lack of any plans or thoughts of the future</p>	<p><b>DON'T TAKE CHANCES!</b> It's possible that someone who exhibits suicidal behavior may have no intention of ending his or her life. But, don't wait to find out- Take action right away</p>

