

# Best Practices in a Postvention Plan



# Best Practices

Suggestions for informing students of unexpected loss of life (fellow students, faculty, or staff) National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement: Sample letter templates for notification;

<https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/samples-templates/>

Suggestions for how to handle classroom discussions regarding the tragedy. A debriefing exercise will be shared.

Identification of a crisis center location with a telephone, manned all day by a member of the crisis team.



# Communication of Crisis

- School Staff
- Students
- Parents- School cast, web, etc.,
- Community Members
- Media



# Postvention Plan continued...

Identification of rooms to be set aside for individual and group counseling.

A plan for calling in substitute teachers/and or a plan to relieve teachers who will need additional time to grieve/debrief.

In the event of a sudden death of a student, have the school counselor follow the student's schedule to provide extra support in those classrooms.



# Anticipatory Loss or Unplanned Loss

**Anticipatory:** Implies the grieving process may begin before the dying person's death

Preparation (emotional, financial)

Settle affairs and make arrangements

Time for reality

**Unplanned:** unexpected with no time to make prior arrangements

Grieving is different – overwhelm the coping abilities

Mentally and emotionally may not be able to grasp the reality



# Postvention Plan continued...

In the event of a student death, suggestions on how staff can best deal with the “empty desk/locker” phenomenon.

Have materials available for students to create memory books, pictures, or other memorials.

Items can be shared with the family delivered through the family liaison.



# Postvention Plan continued...

Some postvention plans will include sample letters that can be sent out to parents.

Other Principals will prefer to run all communication through the media liaison and the district media consultant. Check your crisis plan for direction.

## Evaluation

- Daily during crisis
- Overall- several weeks following crisis



# Parent Guardian Letter (Nancy Kelley Collierville)

August 13, 2016

Dear Best Middle School family,

I am heartbroken to share some very sad news today. Over the weekend, we learned about the tragic loss of one of our 7th grade Best Middle School students, John Doe, who died in a car accident on Saturday afternoon. At this difficult time, we would like to offer our most sincere condolences to John's family. We share in their grief, and we are here to support them in any way that we can. Today to help our children with this news, our school counselors, Mrs. Lucy and Mr. Brown, were joined by members of the District Crisis Response Team to provide support for our students and staff. The children were given an opportunity to talk with members of the Crisis Response Team, express their feelings, and make a card for John's family. Your children may have some questions for you regarding this matter. Please feel free to contact the school counselors if you or your child need any further assistance.

Sincerely, Mrs. Best Principal Ever Best Middle School





# Roles of the family liaison:

To gather information regarding funeral and memorial activities

To help the family gather student's personal belongings in the event of a death

To offer support to the effected family or families

To offer referrals as requested



# Best Practices

Additional support for groups close to the tragedy:

- a student's best friends
- sports team
- family members at school

In addition, a crisis team member will need to check with teachers for several days, helping teachers to identify students who may need "extra" assistance.



# Working with community professionals

Identify licensed professionals in the community that you may allow into the school post emergency.

Have the postvention team establish a relationship with these community professionals.

If the professionals are trained in mental health postvention, and willing to work with your team, try to meet annually together.



# School Policies

## Funeral Attendance

## School Memorial

- moment of silence
- planting a tree
- dedicating a game or event

Have consistency across situations where there is loss of life to prevent hurt or offend families. Follow school policies as outlined in the crisis plan, board policy manual, or school handbook.



# School Memorial Procedure

(Example JCS - MS)

## School Memorials:

Memorials in honor of a deceased staff member or student may be considered at all Jefferson County Schools. Any permanent memorial must be pre-approved by the school's administration and the Director of Schools. The school is strongly encouraged to consult the family of the deceased before approving a memorial.

Recommended consideration for school response include sending flowers to the funeral service, a prayer vigil before or after school for those who want to attend, a moment of silence held at school or an extracurricular event, a signed card by staff or students, a school representative attending a funeral, and allowing students to attend counseling support. A memorial book, donations to the School's Media Center may also be considered.

Spontaneous memorials (such as collections of objects and notes) should not be encouraged and should be respectfully removed within a very short time. A memorial can be an upsetting reminder of a suicide and/or romanticize the deceased in a way that increases risk for suicide imitation or contagion.

# Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network

In case of a suicide or attempted suicide call **TSPN** for support, suggestions, or on site assistance.

**TSPN at 615-297-1077**

[Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network](#)

**National Suicide Hotline**

**1-800-273-8255**

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

Toolkit for schools: [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#)

