

ATTACHMENT 4.26

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES | SUICIDE / PERMITTED TO DISCLOSE

These scripts are intended to be used when communicating with families about a death. In this case, “death” refers to a staff or student suicide-death **and** the family has given the school permission to disclose cause of death. The recommended list of correspondence with families is:

- Notification of a Death (Voice Message) | Day 1
- Notification of a Death (Written Correspondence) | Day 1
- Support Plan Update (Voice Message) | End of Week 1
- Support Plan Update (Written Correspondence) | End of Week 1

Notification of a Death (Voice Message) | Day 1

This script should be read using the school’s automated call system. Parents should be notified via voice message while students are being notified in their classrooms.

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/staff [insert name, if permitted] died by suicide [insert timeline]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.

All our students are being notified of this death by a staff member in [# hour]. I will be sending all parents and guardians a letter which includes the announcement that is being read to students along with valuable resources. This letter will be sent via email and all students will bring home paper copies after school today. If you don’t receive this letter by the end of today, please call us so that we can ensure you have all the information we’ve been able to provide.

Members of our crisis team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today and will continue to be available over the next days and weeks to help students cope with the death of their peer/staff. Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school is consulting with mental health professionals to create a plan for ongoing support. Even if your student didn’t know [insert student/staff name] very well, any loss can trigger their own personal experiences. 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 memorial 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 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for immediate support. You can call or text the number 9-8-8 any time to be connected to a crisis counselor. And of course, please reach out to us with any questions or concerns. Thank you and take care.

SECTION 4: RESPONDING TO A STAFF OR STUDENT LOSS IN SCHOOLS (POSTVENTION)

Notification of a Death (Written Correspondence) | Day 1

This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email/text.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our students/staff [insert name, if permitted] died by suicide [insert timeline]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.

All our students were notified of this death by a staff member 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/staff. You will receive an update regarding our plans to continue supporting students as they are made.

Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school is consulting with mental health professionals to create a plan for ongoing support. Even if your student didn't know [insert student/staff name] very well, any loss can trigger their own personal experiences. 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 memorial 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 you have access to supports available to you.

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

Take care,

[insert signature]

[include relevant attachments]

Support Plan Update (Voice Message) | End of Week 1

This script should be read using the school's automated call system.

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-death of [insert name, if permitted]. 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, I am extremely grateful.

We honor that every person experiences grief differently, and we believe there is no "right way" to grieve any kind of loss. Because this loss was so recent, we feel it is important that all of our students have the option of receiving continued support.

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 mental health professionals and will communicate any support plans to you accordingly.

[If the school has specific plans for support outlined, insert those plans here. Include details like when, where, who, etc.]

Memorial services for [insert name of deceased] will take place on [insert date, time, and location]. 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, our crisis counselors will continue to be available to support any students in need.

I 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 for additional information and know that you can call or text the number 9-8-8 any time to be connected to a crisis counselor.

Thank you.

SECTION 4: RESPONDING TO A STAFF OR STUDENT LOSS IN SCHOOLS (POSTVENTION)

Support Plan Update (Written Correspondence) | End of Week 1

This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email/text.

Hello Parents and Guardians,

We want to acknowledge the immense difficulty of this week as our community continues to process and grieve the suicide-death of [insert name, if permitted]. 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.

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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 remember that you can call or text 9-8-8 at any time for any reason to be connected to a crisis counselor.

Please reach out with any questions, needs, or concerns.

Kindly,

[insert signature]

[include relevant attachments]