

ATTACHMENT 4.02

BEST PRACTICES FOR MEMORIALIZATION POLICIES

This page includes best practices for memorialization policies. This resource is intended to be used as guidance when developing your local memorialization policies for all deaths, including suicide deaths. **Schools should treat all deaths the same when it comes to memorialization policies.** Schools should be committed to discussing with the family of the deceased in each case.

Flags: Flags should not be flown at half-staff. Only the President of the United States or a governor has the authority to order flags to be flown at half-staff.

Memorial Displays: Spontaneous memorials (such as displays of objects and notes) are not encouraged and should be respectfully removed as soon as possible. A memorial display can be an upsetting reminder of a loss and can romanticize the deceased in a way that increases risk of suicide and suicide-imitation or contagion.

Assemblies: Large memorial assemblies are advised against, especially on school property, as the emotions generated at such a gathering can be difficult to control. Instead, students should have opportunities to process their emotions individually or in small groups with trained counselors.

Graduations: Students/staff who have died can be acknowledged and remembered at graduation ceremonies but should not be the focus of the event. Each school should follow their own local board policies on this topic. Physical memorials at graduation ceremonies are not recommended (saving a chair, etc.). Examples of appropriate acknowledgment of the deceased at graduation ceremonies include naming the deceased student/staff at the beginning of the ceremony or facilitating a moment of silence for those who have died.

Memorial Services: It is not recommended that memorial services be held on school grounds.

Long-Term Memorial Displays: Permanent or long-term memorial displays for a deceased student or staff are not recommended on school grounds.

GUIDELINES FOR REMEMBRANCE

- Involve the students in the decision-making process and solicit ideas from them to memorialize the deceased in positive ways that do not put other students at risk or contribute to the emotional crisis that occurs after a death.
- Memorials should be temporary, non-renewable, or “living” (e.g. monetary donation to charity or research, purchase of a suicide prevention program for students, etc.).
- Memorials should celebrate the deceased person's life, not glorify their death.

EXAMPLES OF SAFE MEMORIALIZATIONS

- Invite the students to write personal and lasting remembrance in a memory book located in the counseling office, which will ultimately be given to the family.
- Encourage students to engage in service projects, such as organizing a community service day, sponsoring behavioral health awareness programs, or becoming involved in a peer support program.
- Invite students to make donations to the library or to a scholarship fund in memory of the deceased.