

## ATTACHMENT 4.12

# NOTIFYING ALL STAFF OF A DEATH | NON-SUICIDE / NOT PERMITTED TO DISCLOSE

The following protocol should be used when notifying staff that a death occurred. In this case, “death” refers to a staff or student death that is **not** a suicide, or a staff or student suicide-death when the family has **not** given the school permission to disclose cause of death.

Each school will identify the notification process that is most appropriate for their staff. Consulting the best practices below may help.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR NOTIFYING STAFF

- An Administrator should first notify and convene School Mental Health Team (SMHT).
- The SMHT should identify and make personal phone calls to any staff that had close connections to the deceased **before** any mass communication about the death is disseminated.
  - Do not leave voicemails. If they don't answer, text them to request a phone call ASAP.
- Schools may choose to use their automated system to notify all-staff, or they may choose to utilize a phone tree system. Either way, the following should be considered:
  - Administration should collaborate with mental health staff to write the specific notification script. The notification to all staff should include a request for an emergency staff meeting and should give a specific date/time/location.
  - **Example script:** *Teachers and staff, this message is to inform you that there is a mandatory emergency meeting [this morning/tomorrow morning] at [time] in [location]. It is imperative that you attend this meeting to adequately prepare for the difficult day ahead, as one of our students/staff has died. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please report to the office as soon as you arrive at school so you can be briefed and prepped before walking into your classroom. Thank you.*
- If at any time an Administrator or other SMHT member needs to tag out, ask another member of the SMHT to assist you in continuing the notification process.

## EMERGENCY STAFF MEETING

The school should hold an emergency staff meeting before the next school day begins with the following goals:

1. Take attendance for the meeting and identify staff who are not present. Assign someone to follow up with those staff as soon as possible.
2. Inform the staff of the information the family permitted the school to disclose.
  - a. Address rumors and reiterate the specific information that the family has permitted be shared.
3. Acknowledge the staff's grief and loss, provide opportunities for them to process their feelings, and allow them to opt out of notifying/supporting students if they are too impacted in the moment.
4. Inform them of the school's postvention plan.
5. Prepare them to notify and support students using:
  - a. Student Notification Announcement Script  
*Attachment 4.13*
  - b. Supporting Students Through Grief  
*Attachment 4.14*
  - c. School and Community Resource List  
*Attachment 4.03*

## CONSIDERATIONS

The notification process can become messy and nuanced. There is no universal process that is going to meet the needs of every building or every scenario. The most important thing is that all staff, students, and families are notified of the death as soon as possible and are provided immediate and ongoing support.

If news of a death occurs during the school day, notifying staff can look different depending on the time of day, size of school, spread of (mis)information, etc. We still recommend notifying staff who had close connections with the deceased person first before notifying the rest of the staff.