

POSTVENTION

What you do after a death by suicide can help prevent more tragic deaths. This is sometimes called "postvention."

SCHOOL POSTVENTION GOALS

- * Support the grieving process.
- * Prevent imitative suicides.
- * Identify & refer at risk survivors.
- * Reduce identification with the victim.
- * Re-establish a healthy school and community climate.
- * Provide long-term surveillance.

POSTVENTION IN SCHOOLS

Points to emphasize to students, parents, media (including online).

- * Prevention (share warning signs & risk factors for suicide).
- * Stress that no one thing/person/organization is to blame.
- * Emphasize the connection between suicide and mental illness.
- * Normalize anger.
- * Share resources, and communicate that "help is available and help works".

SCHOOL RESPONSE PROTOCOL

- * Verify suicide.
- * Contact family of suicide victim.
- * Determine what and how information is to be shared.
- * Follow your school district's suicide prevention and postvention plan.
- * Mobilize the crisis response team.
- * Inform faculty and staff.
- * Assess the impact on the school.
- * Identify at risk students/staff.
- * Identify what is and has been shared on internet and/or social networking sites and post positive messages about resources for help.
- * Follow guidelines for media and share reporting on suicide guidelines with media.
- * Protect other youth from contagion by encouraging parents of the deceased student to remove their child's social media pages after a period following the death.
- * Seek out mental health professionals who might post the **1-800-273-8255** Suicide Prevention Lifeline link & local referral info on social network sites.
- * When possible, identify youth opinion leaders to provide referral information on internet sites.

Detailed response protocols for schools with sample letters, messages, checklists & step by step action steps are available online from:

- * Coming Together to Care, A Suicide Prevention and Postvention Toolkit for Texas Communities - <http://www.texassuicideprevention.org> .
- * After a Suicide, A Toolkit for Schools - <https://www.afsp.org> .
- * Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools - <http://store.samhsa.gov/> .

Clusters of completed suicide occur predominantly among adolescents and young adults. Suicide clusters are thought by many to occur primarily through a process of contagion. Studies suggests that exposure of the general population to suicide through television, movies and the internet may increase the risk for suicide for certain, high risk, susceptible individuals. Appropriate school postvention protocols can help prevent clusters and contagion.

COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION

- * Notify parents of highly affected students.
- * Provide recommendations for community-based mental health services (Local mental health community centers have a suicide prevention officer and crisis service staff who can help schools with an evidenced-based postvention response.)
- * Conduct faculty planning session & evening meeting for parents.
- * Collaborate with media, law enforcement and community agencies.
- * Provide factual information as it is available from law enforcement being careful to support the family of the deceased student. Schools can provide postvention support without confirming a death is a suicide if that has not yet been ruled on with respect for the family involved.
- * Do not glorify the act of suicide, or give detailed information about the means used. This can add to a contagion or cluster effect with youth.

MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING A DEATH BY SUICIDE

- * Do not conduct on campus memorial services.
- * Provide opportunity for small group/individual discussion with mental health professionals.
- * Do not glorify act.
- * Avoid mass assemblies focusing on victim.
- * Do not establish permanent memorials to victim.
- * Do not dedicate yearbooks, songs, or sporting events to the suicide victim.
- * Establish school policies to discourage t-shirts or other student memorializing which might disrupt/disturb other high, risk students.

RESOURCES

- * NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE **1-800-273-8255**. Save this number to save a life.
- * TEXAS CRISIS LINE OPTIONS – All LMHAs in Texas are required to provide a 24-hour crisis line for their service area (which may be a county or a region of counties) and these lines are required to be certified by the American Association of Suicidology. To find the number to the LMHA crisis line closest to you, log onto the DSHS/HHSC website and search crisis hotlines: <http://dshs.texas.gov/mhsa-crisishotline/> or download the ASK About Suicide To Save A Life App.
- * OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES – 911, hospitals, law enforcement, mobile outreach crisis teams and health and mental health professionals.
- * For IMMEDIATE RISK call 911, your local or campus police or sheriff, or take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- * For more information on best practices for media coverage after a death by suicide, see ReportingonSuicide.org or Part 6 of "Coming Together to Care, A Suicide Prevention and Postvention Toolkit for Texas Communities," http://www.texassuicideprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015_Toolkit_Online.pdf

For help with school and community postvention, we can connect you with members of the Texas Suicide Postvention Task Force, the DSHS/HHSC Suicide Prevention Office or the local mental health authority who may be able to offer technical assistance as needed. See the Coming Together To Care Toolkit on Suicide Prevention and Postvention at TexasSuicidePrevention.org for more information.

Developed by Merily H. Keller, hodgekeller@yahoo.com with information and collaboration from Scott Poland, Ed.D and Frank Zenere, Ed.S., with review & assistance from the Texas Suicide Prevention Council.

Funding for this publication and training was made possible by the Texas Department of State Health Services grant number 2016-048043-001A and in part by grant number SM61468 from SAMHSA. The views expressed in this publication and training do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CMHS, SAMHSA, HHS or DSHS; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the State of Texas or U.S. Government.

See Postvention section, "Coming Together to Care: A Suicide Prevention & Postvention Toolkit" at TexasSuicidePrevention.org



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