EMERGENCY MEASURES
TRAGIC EVENTS
RESPONSE

Procedural Guidelines
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North East School Division #200
Emergency Measures/Tragic Events Response
Procedural Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

A crisis or tragic event can trigger overwhelming emotional responses. It is almost inevitable that members of the school division will face a crisis or tragic event at some time. An established response plan to such an event can be a support to division staff, school staff, students and members of the community.

The purpose of this document is to recommend an organizational structure to support the appropriate responses to a crisis or tragic event in North East School Division and provide procedural guidelines for school staff to use in responding to such a crisis or tragic event.
Beliefs

- A death or other tragic event can affect all members of a school and community.
- A well planned response to a crisis or tragic event can be an effective support to students, school personnel and the community.
- The focus of the responses should be a demonstration of the ability to cope with the situation while recognizing that life must and will go on.
- Grieving is a natural, necessary and highly individual process.
- Different tragic events require different responses relative to the situation and school. Provision for this flexibility is included in an effective plan.
- Compassionate attitudes and immediate action following tragic events are crucial factors in initiating the "healing" process.
- Networks of communication and established roles of school staff members and workers in community agencies contribute to the effectiveness of a plan.
- The Emergency Measures/Tragic Events Response Plan will most often deal with initial emotional responses as well as the logical responses in people affected by a crisis or tragic event.
- Between the immediate responses and the longer term interventions are the intermediate times which can also serve as a preventative measure. It is important to be watchful and aware of changes in behaviour(s).
- For many of the people affected by a tragic event, recovery is a long term process. Provision for longer term interventions is an important extension of the plan.
- By diffusing feelings of shock, guilt, anger, anxiety and/or denial through a thoughtful program, future tragedies such as suicide may be prevented.
Definition of the Response Plan

The plan provides procedural guidelines to help students, staff and the community understand the emotional response/pain involved in a crisis or tragic event. Coping skills can be strengthened when proper guidance is provided. The initial hours and days following a tragic event are critical to begin the difficult journey of emotional healing.

The plan provides guidance in response to:

- the natural death of a student or school staff member.
- the unexpected death of a student, school staff member, parent or other identified person.
- an emergency or crisis of major proportion which affects the students and school staff.
- the serious injury of a student or school staff member.

This plan involves the school in cooperation with community agencies and organizations. These guidelines provide an opportunity to in-service staff prior to a crisis or tragedy which then will allow for implementation of procedures if such an event does occur. This response is an organized and planned way to address traumatic loss in an attempt to meet the emotional needs of all involved and to serve as a powerful support tool.

A further purpose of the plan is to provide the school with strategies to deal with inquiries from the news media and the public and to guide the dissemination of information about the tragic event to those who need to know. This ensures that only accurate information is provided thereby providing protection for the school, family and community.

Finally the plan provides guidance in defining the roles for school staff and external support staff in response to a crisis or tragic event.

These procedures are established to provide general guidelines. It is important to remember that each situation should be treated in a manner that addresses the uniqueness of each school and school community.
PROACTIVE RESPONSE:

School Emergency Measures & Tragic Events Response Teams

1. Membership

School Emergency Measures:
Membership in the School Emergency Measures Response Team shall consist of the school administrator (who shall act as coordinator), teacher representatives and the counselling consultant assigned to that school.

Tragic Events:
Membership in the Tragic Events Response Team shall consist of the school administrator (who in consultation with the Coordinator of Integrated School Services will determine team leader), teacher representatives and the counselling consultant assigned to that school.

2. Roles of Reception Area Coordinator
(Usually the administrative assistant for the school will assume this role)

- Remain in the office to take phone calls, direct inquires and help resource personnel find where they have been assigned (as directed by the administrator and/or School Response Team).
- Determine what information can be released (as determined by the School Response Team in consultation with the Superintendent of School Services).
- Remember that all media inquires will be handled by the Division Office.
- Contact the members of the School Response Team regarding phone inquires or someone from outside the school coming into the school.
- Contact the counselling consultant if staff or students are asking about counselling/support personnel.
- Make sure lists of students, parent’s phone numbers and alternate contact numbers are available.

3. Roles of the School Response Team (General)

- Determine the number of members and assignments of the School Response Teams (it is recommended that this happen at the beginning of each school year).
- Review the Emergency Measures/Tragic Response Procedural Guidelines annually with all staff.
- Access services, as required, from Division Based Response Team.

** The school principal shall submit the School Response Teams membership lists to the Superintendent of Student Services by September 30th. Procedures in this response manual will be discussed with all school staff members prior to September 30th of each school year. **
**Division Based Response Team**

1. **Membership**

   Membership shall consist of division personnel (such as: Director, Superintendents, Coordinators, Student Services Personnel) requested by the School Response Team. **The principal in consultation with the Coordinator of Integrated School Services will determine which division personnel are required based upon the needs of the specific event.**

2. **Roles of Division Based Response Team**

   - Provide direct assistance in specific roles at the request of the School Response Team.
   - Ensure on-going support is provided as necessary from outside agencies (such as: Mental Health Services, Social Services, Addiction Services, Victim Services).
   - Participate in School Response Team meetings and staff meetings at the request of the School Response Team.
# Emergency Phone Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>911 Emergency number (Ambulance, RCMP, Fire Department)</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Children’s Advocate Office</td>
<td>1-800-322-7221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services – Child and Family Services, Financial Assistance</td>
<td>752-6100 (Melfort Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Stress Line</td>
<td>1-800-667-4442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey Trail Health Region</td>
<td>873-3100 (Regional Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Help Phone</td>
<td>1-800-668-6868 (24 Hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health/Addiction Services</td>
<td>752-8767 (Melfort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Association * CONTACT APPROPRIATE CHURCH *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East Outreach and Support Services</td>
<td>1-800-611-6349 (Crisis Line 24 hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Services</td>
<td>752-6310 (Melfort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.C.M.P.</td>
<td>752-6420 (Melfort)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO A TRAGIC EVENT:

The Role of the School Response Team

- Determine the size of the problem and the type of extra support required from the Division Based Support Team.
- Determine the support required from the School Response Team.
- Invite the required support personnel from the Division Based Support Team to attend the School Response Team meeting as soon as possible.
- Designate rooms for grieving and counselling.
- Discuss, with support persons, the roles and responsibilities of each team member.
- The Superintendent of School Services is the division contact person who will respond to all media requests and general inquiries. Use the utmost discretion when dealing with the media.
- Select one or more staff members to be the ongoing contact person(s) with the family. A home visit may be very appropriate.
- Identify high risk individuals in the student and staff population and ensure support is provided as necessary.
- Assign school employees who do not have immediate classroom responsibility to monitor the school entrance, hallways and washrooms and to provide additional recess supervision.
- Determine if volunteers are required for specific tasks and assign individuals the responsibility of contacting the volunteers.
- Determine how to deal with anxious parents of other students.
- Devise a plan for continuous monitoring of the situation throughout the school day.
The Role of the School Administrator

IMMEDIATE RESPONSES CHECKLIST (Within 24 hours of the traumatic event)

SELF

- Make sure you are okay ... ask for help.
- Verify facts with the family or appropriate agency.
- Obtain permission from the immediate family (or agency) for sharing information. ( Decide what can be shared).
- Extend “initial” sympathy from the school to the family.
- Obtain name and phone number of family contact person.
- Notify the Superintendent of Student Services or Superintendent of School Services. Clarify process for responding to media inquiries.
- Notify the other administrators who have siblings attending their school.
- Arrange for substitute teacher(s) if deemed necessary.

TEAM

- Meet with the School Response Team.
- Notify ALL staff (including those absent (i.e.) on leave) of the tragedy and call a staff meeting. Design a plan to contact those currently absent from the school.
  - Refer to a pre-established network of communication (i.e. phone tree).
- Discuss the procedures for sharing information with the parents of students not directly involved and determine the method of communicating with the parents (letter, telephone call, assembly).
- Prepare a written statement of the traumatic event.

STAFF

- Conduct staff meeting regarding the nature of traumatic event.
- Distribute the written statement of the traumatic event.
- Provide a suitable environment and opportunities for staff to sort out and validate their emotions. Allow time for expression and orientation around the situation.
- Announce that there will be another staff meeting at the end of the school day.
SCHOOL

- Designate the first period of the day (or the first appropriate period) for discussion and debriefing with students.

- Cancel school events as necessary.

- Promote an atmosphere whereby the teachers are given the freedom to discuss and debrief the event with the students. (Strategies and activities should be available for the teachers to enable students to express their feelings and to respond to the event. This information and guidance can be provided by your counselling consultant.)

NOTE:
A quick reference guide for how to immediately respond to an emergency or tragic event has been included in the Appendices.
Initial Staff Meeting

1. Introduction

It is important to reflect on your own feelings around death/dying prior to discussing a tragic event with fellow staff members. Remember you are there to provide support and direction during an extremely emotional time. To that end it is important to maintain your sense of purpose. In many cases, however, there may be no clear path to take and when in doubt "working from the heart" and being sensitive to the needs of others will help lead you in the right direction.

It is important to recognize that many groups may want to be part of the process you initiate after the first staff meeting. These groups could include students, parents of children from school, interest groups from your own and other communities, the general public and school system personnel.

2. Sharing the Facts

Sharing the most current facts of the event in an honest and forthright manner helps to satisfy the need to know. It also helps to dispel myths, misinformation or rumours which tend to surface following a tragic event. This provides the group with a common starting point to work from. Taking time to clarify misinformation is often necessary. If you have been in contact with members of the immediate family (families), you might wish to share information regarding your contact with them.

3. Sharing the Feelings

It is not unusual to have feelings such as shock, anger and guilt surface and you should allow some time for staff members to express their feelings. Sub-issues such as battery and abuse may arise and direction may have to be provided to keep discussion from becoming open ended. While it is necessary to give permission for people to voice their feelings it is also “okay” to place closure on this part of the meeting providing you give assurance that there can be follow-up discussion as requested. Throughout this process of sharing feelings you are helping others to fulfill a need while directing them to the next step.

4. Where to? Planning Stage

At this point in the staff meeting you may wish to address other issues such as:

- Disclosing facts to students and the community.
- Working with the media.
- Providing a newsletter.
- Identifying available resources.
- Discussing the plan for the next hour, for the rest of the day (week) and so on. In other words have a plan and be prepared to discuss it in detail. Remember that most staff members have just received a considerable amount of information, most of which they are just starting to process. They probably have not had the benefit of time to look for solutions as you have. Be prepared to speak directly with statements such as “This is how we will deal with…” or “The resource team assigned to our school will be…and they are able to offer the following services…” Stress the positives where possible. People need to see a light at the end of the tunnel and a positive attitude with information presented in a non-judgemental fashion is necessary to meet the pressures of the day.
5. **Vulnerable Individuals**

It is important to be aware of students, staff or parents whose questions, behaviours or reactions to the tragic event identify them “at risk”. Consider having a support system in place that can be explained to all so that immediate support can be provided as required. Support may be offered in an individual or group fashion depending on the needs. Being proactive and inviting a group or an individual to discuss concerns often tempers or softens the concern before it becomes a major issue.

6. **Follow-Up**

Concluding the staff meeting with a call for a follow-up meeting at the end of the day with all staff provides reassurance and invites feedback. It also provides the opportunity to more fully discuss plans such as memorial service, funeral attendance, assembly, tribute and other necessary actions.

**MONITORING THE DAY**

Consider doing the following:

- It is important for members of the school's administrative team to be visible and available to staff, students and parents within the school setting by informally visiting classrooms, walking the hallways and/or playground during breaks in the day.

- Being an active listener demonstrates caring while keeping a finger on the “pulse” or "mood" throughout the school.

- Check to see that the "plan" from the morning staff meeting is in place and being followed and make adjustments as required. Staff members will not be equally comfortable or knowledgeable in following a plan related to a tragic event.

- You may have to reallocate or shift resources so that the "plan" is followed for all students.

- Finally take time to assess the initial staff meeting. Was it helpful? Which parts of it require follow-up? Plan to address at the follow-up meeting after school.
The Role of the Teacher

Teachers will:

- announce events to students as determined by Administrator at initial staff meeting.
- lead class discussion.
- identify students in need of counselling.
- generate activities to reduce impact of trauma.
- structure and shorten assignments.
- discuss the idea of postponing testing.
- recognize that classroom routines and management may be disrupted. (This is natural — be flexible.)
- determine whether extra counselling/support is needed for students/teacher in the classroom.
- be aware that students congregating in large, unsupervised groups may result in intensifying traumatic emotional responses.
- not permit grieving students to leave the school during school hours without parental permission. Recommend that parents or designates be requested to accompany their children.
- determine, in consultation with School/Division Response Team, when and how to remove the student’s desk from the classroom in the event of a death.
- attempt to maintain normalcy if at all possible.
Teacher’s Initial Meeting with Students after a Tragic Event

During the initial meeting teachers will:

- provide students with the information they need and that they can handle. Information is to be determined by School/Division Response Teams - the same information is shared at the same time.
- stress that we each react differently to tragedies and must respect one another's feelings and ways of reacting.
- point out that grief, sadness, anger, guilt, fear and disbelief are all normal reactions in response to a tragic event and that support personnel are available.
- provide an open and non-judgemental atmosphere in which students can say what and how they feel about the event.
- provide students who witness an event a chance to talk in age appropriate groups prior to leaving that day with an appropriate leader.
- strongly encourage students to seek assistance from one of the support personnel, if the student's reactions seem particularly intense or if the teacher feels unable to respond to them adequately. Offer to accompany them to meet the counsellor.
- request help from the School Response Team or Division Based Support Team member if students have questions you are unable to answer or if you are feeling uncomfortable in the discussion.
- encourage students to be supportive of one another but stress the importance of seeking help or encouraging their friends to seek help from adults if their feelings seem more intense or persistent than “normal”.
- allow students the choice to participate in the discussion in the room or seek assistance from the school counsellor. Don’t assume that the lack of a visible reaction means that the student has no reaction.
- consult with student services personnel regarding student (and parent when necessary) requests related to goodbye rituals, commemoration and memorialization.

Allow as much time as students seem to need for the discussion. Try to move discussion toward how students can help one another express sympathy for the family.

If the teacher/support staff is feeling overwhelmed, there are support services available (i.e. S.T.F., Manulife, Mental Health services).
Accessing Available Resources and Agencies

As a teacher who is providing support to students following a traumatic event, it is important to recognize one’s limitations as a caregiver. There are many resources and agencies within a community which can help to meet the diversity of students’ needs following a traumatic event. Each agency or resource includes people who can bring a multitude and wide range of personalities and expertise. Each person brings his/her own unique ideas, skills, experiences and personal qualities.

Some of the many benefits of connecting with outside resources and agencies:

- Relieve some of the demands on the teacher as a caregiver.
- Complement the role of the teacher as a caregiver.
- Provide a wide range of information specific to each agency's area/mandate (i.e. educate).
- Create a network/team with whom the teacher can work.
- Become the community network for providing post-trauma intervention.
- Empower the community to become involved in and supportive of traumatic interventions.
- Raise community awareness of the need for the community to become involved in dealing with the trauma which its members experience following a traumatic event.
- Help to meet specific needs of individual students who are experiencing the effects of a traumatic event.

Teachers should contact their counselling consultant for assistance.
Preparing For the Unexpected

On the day of the crisis be prepared for an extremely intense day. You will make a difference. Students will look to you for help.

a) Facial tissues - Have an ample supply.

b) Paper and pencils - Frequently it helps the students to express their feelings through writing or drawing. It is helpful for you to keep a list of students you have seen especially noting the high risk students.

c) Clay - This may be used as a tool for students unable to express themselves through writing, drawing or talking.

d) Ask counselling consultant/outreach worker for crisis phone numbers.

e) Maps of the building - If outside resource team members are asked to assist a map of the building may help to clarify designated areas where students will be seen, where the rest room areas are, etc.

f) At risk students should be directed to a central area where a designated member of the crisis team will determine the level of service needed (group or individual counselling or sent home). Students needing to be sent home will be sent to a staff person who will contact the parent or guardian to arrange for appropriate transportation.

g) Crisis Counselling Rooms.

h) Throughout the day of the crisis and perhaps for several days, students who are particularly upset should be given the option of leaving class and going to an identified support room. Every attempt will be made to staff this support room with members of the crisis team which may include counselling consultants, Mental Health staff, Victim Services, etc. There should always be at least two staff assigned to the identified support room. A schedule for crisis team coverage should be developed so coverage is available throughout the crisis period.

Taken from http://www.wcresa.k12.mi.us/Wayne-Westland/response.htm
Teacher Guidelines for Talking To Students about Death

1. Prepare students for the serious and tragic nature of the information you are about to share with them. Say that it is expected that this news will upset many of them and that both you and other staff are there to help them get through this. Staff should try to be calm but let your humanity show as well.

2. Announce the facts of the situation and what actions are being taken as a result (i.e.) all classes are being informed, support rooms are being set up).

3. Allow students to react. Pay special attention to the following:
   - Dispel any rumours or unconfirmed information.
   - Stress that we each react differently to tragedies and must respect one another’s feelings and ways of reacting.
   - Point out that grief, sadness, anger, guilt, fear and disbelief are all normal reactions to such news.

4. Convey a sense of acceptance for all the feelings expressed. Avoid judgmental or value statements about anyone’s feeling.

5. Note that some people’s feelings will be stronger than others and that individual help is available (name where and with whom) for those who want to discuss their feelings further with someone.

6. If student's reactions seem particularly intense or you feel unable to respond to them adequately, strongly encourage them to seek assistance at one of the designated support rooms. Offer to accompany them to the room.

7. If students have questions you are unable to answer or if you are feeling uncomfortable in the discussion, request help from the School Response Team.

8. Encourage students to be supportive of one another but stress the importance of seeking help or encouraging their friends to seek help from adults if their feelings seem more intense or persistent than "normal".

9. Reassure students that they are not responsible for what happened - discourage guilt and unrealistic "hindsight regrets". Instead focus discussion on how they might use what they now know to avoid similar tragedies in the future.

10. Stress that the feelings students now have are temporary and will diminish with time. Display your own sense of assurance that things will get better.

11. In cases of suicide avoid glamorizing the death or dead person. Stress that this was a tragic and unnecessary event.

12. In cases of suicide avoid focusing on the details or circumstances that led up to the person’s death. Stress that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and focus discussion on how the person might have gotten help to avoid this tragic ending. Stress that suicide is not a normal reaction to life’s setbacks.

13. Allow students who do not want to participate in the discussion to study quietly in the room or to go to one of the drop-in centres. Don’t assume that the lack of a visible reaction means the student has no reaction. As well with some students no response can be okay too.

14. Allow as much time as students seem to need for the discussion. Try to move discussion toward how students can help one another express sympathy for the family.

15. Discussion moves to suicide prevention. Be aware that this can be useful but a very sensitive topic for the friends of the deceased.

16. End the class by reminding students of the counselling and support services that are available.
How to Have a Conversation with Students about Death

There are three basic tasks you can do:

- Listen
- Talk
- Physical contact

Statements people often find helpful:

- "I am sorry about your mother’s death"
- "I don't know what to say"
- "I have heard about your loss and am concerned and will help if I can"

Things people often find helpful

- Letting them know you are aware of the death
- Acknowledgement of their pain
- A simple card
- Doing something special for them

Statements people often find not helpful:

- "It will be all right. I just know!"
- "Let me know if there is anything I can do"
- "I know how you feel"
- "Try not to think about it"
- "Good people die young"
- "Time heals"

Sentence starters:

Encourage students to engage in a discussion (below are some suggestions):

- “I’m having a lot of mixed feelings/thoughts about this. What are your feelings/thoughts when you heard the announcement?”
- “Who are the adults you can discuss this with outside of school?”
- “If you have had other losses in your life before, how are you feeling now? “
- “Where are places you can go to talk about these feelings?”
- “What can you do to help your classmates at this time?”
**Vulnerable Students (Sudden Death)**

Identify and refer to the School Support Team. Students who may have a stronger reaction to a sudden death could include:

- students with prior suicidal behaviour.
- students with a history of emotional illness or depression.
- students who have recently suffered a loss such as a death, break-up of a romance, and/or a separation/divorce of parents.
- students who were close friends or siblings of the deceased.
Follow-Up Staff Meeting (For All Staff)

CONSIDER DOING THE FOLLOWING:

- A review of the events of the day in an informal atmosphere by the school administrator.
- Having food present. Food and drinks give people something in their hands and help to provide a relaxing environment.
- At this time an update on the tragic event (i.e., funeral arrangements) may be timely. Having dealt with the most recent information encourage feedback from the staff.
- How was their initial meeting with students?
- What is the mood in the classroom?
- Which concerns did students identify?
- Are the support resources sufficient?
- Are any students at risk?
- Have parents of those students been notified?
- Sharing this kind of information is helpful for all staff. As they listen to each other they congratulate each other and recognize they have survived and learned through a very difficult day.
- Discuss the plans for the next day and ensuing days. Most importantly recognize the many successes.
- Acknowledge the good ideas, the sensitivity and the caring. Your staff needs to be congratulated on helping a community work through a very emotional event.
- Encourage your staff to go home early and rejuvenate. Self-care is very important. Remind teachers they can access counselling services through STF. Support staff can access counselling services through employment benefits (Manulife program entitled Resilience 1-866-644-0326)

ADMINISTRATOR SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME VISIT

- With a designated staff member visit the deceased student’s family.
- Offer formal condolences.
- Obtain family wishes about staff/student attendance at the funeral.
- Offer appropriate assistance if requested, i.e. readings, music, etc. for funeral service.
- Take note of any request from parents for assistance (i.e.) gathering/delivering student belongings.
LONG-TERM RESPONSE TO A TRAGIC EVENT:

The Role of the School Response Team

- Confirm that support services are available (counselling, etc.).
- Advise the staff that they should be aware of students congregating in large, unsupervised groups as this may result in intensifying traumatic emotional responses.
- Advise the staff not to permit grieving students to leave the school during school hours without parental permission.
- Recommend that parents or designates be requested to accompany their children.
- Plan and coordinate a parent information meeting if requested or if necessary.
- Arrange to meet with the parents of the student(s) involved.
- Encourage the parents to keep in contact with the school to keep the school informed about the on-going situation.
- Make the parents aware of the services and resources available to them and to their children.
- As appropriate make a formal expression of sympathy to the family (flowers, card).
- Obtain information on the funeral arrangements and the family wishes with respect to the attendance of the students and staff at the funeral.
- Arrange a future meeting to determine if further supports are required.

In the event of a death:

- discuss with the parents how they can obtain the student's belongings;
- determine, in consultation with parents, how and when to remove the student's desk from the classroom,
- discuss (with the parents) transition plans for brothers/sisters to come back into the school.
- continue to advise the staff that personal grieving reactions are acceptable and normal and that support personnel are available.
- coordinate staff in-service, if needed, following the tragic event (i.e. further information on the grieving process, etc.).
- assess the effectiveness of the school's tragic event response protocol as it relates to this specific event.
- make recommendations to your Counselling Consultant for revision of the protocol based on the experiences during this event.
The Role of the School Administrator

LONG-TERM RESPONSES CHECKLIST (During the week of the traumatic event and beyond)

- Make sure you are okay ... ask for help.
- Arrange for additional substitutes if required.
- Continue plan to follow-up with students and staff who are currently absent from school.
- Review & follow up with Team – Staff – School initiatives from Immediate Response.
- Conduct as needed additional debriefing staff meetings.
- Assess the nature of the reaction of the staff and students.
- Update the staff on any information concerning the event.
- Arrange for personal contact with the parents of the students who are identified as at risk.

In The Event of Critical Illness or Injury:

- Determine who will be the contact(s) with the students/parents. (i.e. a hospital stay).

In The Event of a Death:

- With a designated staff member visit the deceased student’s/staff member’s family.
- In consultation with the Director, Superintendent of School Services, the School Response Team and the Staff determine who will attend the funeral.
- Arrange for attendance of the students and staff at the funeral or memorial service if necessary.
- Pay particular attention to the needs of the homeroom class and teacher and provide the necessary support.
- Identify additional high-risk students and staff. Consult with the Counselling Consultant. Determine action.
- Consult with Division Response team to determine whether or not a goodbye ritual is appropriate.

If the administrator needs additional guidance or support, there are services available (i.e. counsellors within the School Division, S.T.F., Mental Health services)
The Role of the Teacher

LONG-TERM RESPONSES (During the week of the traumatic event and beyond)

1. Make sure you are okay ... ask for help.
2. Talk to Admin about taking a day off and getting a substitute if you need.
3. Continue plan to follow-up with students and staff who are currently absent from school.
4. Keep a homework package for close family/friends who are absent from school so it can be sent home or done to catch up at school.
5. Monitor student behaviour that may have been affected negatively by the traumatic event.
6. Participate in review & follow up Team – Staff – School initiatives from Immediate & Intermediate Responses.

If the teacher is feeling overwhelmed, there are support services available (i.e. S.T.F., Mental Health services)
When a Student Returns To School

When a student returns to school after experiencing the loss of a parent or sibling it can be uncomfortable for both the student and the rest of the class. If possible allow the student to get settled in as usual. Sometime early in the day the teacher should speak to the student privately, expressing concern, sharing any relevant experience and letting the student know that he/she understands how painful life is right now. The teacher’s body language is important — make eye contact, keep a relaxed bearing and remember that returning to school is a very important step for that student. It is the sign of beginning to return to “normalcy” and perhaps returning to a place where the student can find the most stable environment in his/her life at that moment. Be direct in your comments. Avoid platitudes or euphemisms.

Later let the student talk about the death as well as discussing any concerns about getting behind in school work. Accept the feelings, fears and concerns of the student. Recognize that people vary in how much they wish to disclose their feelings. Allow them to talk.

Demonstrate by touch, if appropriate, as well as words that you care. When a person is faced with painful feelings, especially those that make him/her isolated, physical contact can be very important. Touching, when touching is needed, may contribute so much that it outweighs the very slight possibility that it will not be desired.

Recognize that the pain of a loss may persist over an extended period. The teacher may choose to consult with appropriate resource personnel regarding students who have suffered such a loss.

The teacher should have taken time to discuss with the class the return of the bereaved student. There is a tendency to avoid people who have experienced a death. A sense of isolation results partly from the deliberate withdrawal of the person who has experienced a death of a family member or friend but it is also caused by others who avoid the bereaved. The teacher should encourage their students to be open and supportive of the bereaved student upon his/her return without an excessive focus on the death. Students should be cautioned again about gossip, inappropriate questions or comments.
THE CRUCIAL C’S

Assist the student to feel **CONNECTED**

1. Provide opportunities for cooperative interaction.
   a. Be clear about class rules and have a plan for problem solving with others.
   b. Use cooperative games, songs, plays and creative dramatics.
   c. Engage the student in class group projects. Give them a role where they can be successful. Help them plan a surprise for the class.
   d. Develop a group identity and assist the student to participate in activities such as creating a class banner, class song, planning celebrations, a class diary.
   e. Use cooperative learning activities with one or two other students.

2. Show a personal interest in the student
   a. Greet the student by name at the beginning of the day
   b. Acknowledge their moods – “looks like your having a rough day”. Some days are like that: “You look pleased today”.
   c. Chat with them in the hallway, plan a special time together.
   d. Find out about hobbies, family, things of interest.
   e. Ask the child to share at a class meeting about their interest or to teach a skill to others in the class.

3. Give positive attention
   a. Help the student see themselves in a new way. Use descriptive words. “You are curious”. “That was brave of you”.
   b. Rather that encouraging success, encourage the attempt to take risks and try new things.
   c. Display a variety of student’s work in the class – not just perfect papers.

4. Find and recognize strengths and talents
   a. Look for strengths – not just academic, but mechanical, artistic, athletic, creative and social
   b. Be a talent scout – find something the child is good at and uncover the skills used in that activity. Then show how these qualities are used in other areas. Dungeon and Dragons = logic; athletics = determination; video games = concentration.
   c. Simply accentuate the positive.

5. Show acceptance and separate the deed from the doer.
   “I liked the way you handled _________. I liked it when you _______________ because ___________. When you ____________, I felt ____________ because _______________.”

6. Send cards, messages home to absent students.

Helping the student feel **CAPABLE**

1. Make mistakes a learning experience.
   a. Set the tone on the first day of school: Ask, how many people think they might make a mistake this year? It is sometimes a worry that if you are asked a question you won’t know the answer. Is it O.K. not to know? You bet. We don’t make fun of those who make mistakes.
   b. Demonstrate learning from mistakes. Simply state _______________ was new information. Next time you’ll know _______________.
   c. Note the way you respond to errors. Allow the child time to try again, offer clues. Do not call on another student immediately. This conveys the message that errors are failures and we are more interested in performance than process.
   d. Look for how far the student has come, not how far they have to go.
   e. Concentrate on the effort, not the errors. We need to accept mistakes if children are willing to take a risk.
   f. Point out what is done well when grading papers. (for example +70 instead of –30).
2. Build confidence
   a. Focus on improvement, not perfection.
   b. Notice contributions.
   c. Build on strengths.
   d. Believe in students.
      - Have realistic expectations.
      - Allow them to struggle and succeed if the job is within their capabilities.
      - Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation.
      - Focus on the present, not the past (expecting repeat behaviors) or the future (kids worry about their ability to keep up).
   e. Analyze successes to see what they did right. Why was an approach successful? Would they be willing to teach others?
   f. Insure successes – divide up large tasks into smaller more manageable ones. Give opportunities to repeat successful experiences.

Helping the student feel that he or she **COUNTS.**

1. Through **contribution:**

   A. Provide opportunities for students to be helpful to the group in class.
      - Offer jobs that are meaningful. Give some responsibility.

      1. Provide some choices for projects – brainstorm:
         - What could we do?
         - What do we need?
         - How can we get what we need?
         - Who can do what part?

      2. Make rules together
         - What helps? Behaviors that make being here easy and fun.
         - What hurts? Behaviors that sabotage or interfere with others right to play, participate, learn or feel safe.

   B. By helping each other. Use peer tutoring.

      1. Make a list of skills the student could teach others and a list of things I would like to learn. (clay, jump rope, basketball).
      2. Provide peer opportunities for teaching and learning.

   C. By helping in the community.

      1. Charity drives, community clean up, etc.
      2. Regular visitation of nursing homes, volunteering at shelters.
      3. Tutoring younger children.

2. Through **recognition:**

   A. Recognition box – have students fill out cards (signed or anonymous) on something they have noticed about someone else.

   B. Ask students to periodically evaluate themselves, develop goals, and assess improvement.

   C. Give appreciation and compliments at classroom meetings

   D. Send notes of encouragement to parents telling them about their child’s improvements or continued effort.
Helping children develop **COURAGE.**

1. Have the courage to be imperfect: don’t expect perfection of self or others

2. Point to strengths, not weaknesses

3. Don’t make comparisons with others

4. Be curious, not accusing
   - Ensure children understand the instructions.
   - See if the child’s understanding is the same as yours.
   - Learn where help/correction are necessary.

5. Ask yourself these questions:
   - Am I inspiring self-evaluation or dependence on another’s evaluation?
   - Am I respectful or am I patronizing?
   - Am I seeing the child’s point of view or only my own?
   - Would I say this to a friend?

6. Avoid debilitating help, such as:
   - Overlooking misbehaviours without taking appropriate action.
   - Regularly doing for children what they can do for themselves.
   - Rescuing students from uncomfortable consequences of their actions (we have to intervene to keep students safe or if the outcome would be extreme discouragement; but some discomfort isn’t dangerous).

7. Avoid criticism
   - A relationship is very important if you want a student to hear what you say without defensiveness (even then it’s tough).
   - Check-out what information a student is asking for. Did they want encouragement or correction? Feedback or just someone to hear their presentation?
   - Success is usually dependent upon the willingness to put forth the effort needed to improve. By focusing on what a student already does well, they get the idea that success is the most important value. They may avoid working in areas where success is not already guaranteed.
   - Commenting on improvement or effort is more encouraging than only noticing when a job is successfully completed.

**Adapted from:** Bettner, B. & Low, A. (1998) *Responsibility in the classroom: A teacher’s guide to understanding and motivating students.*

**WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE EMPTY DESK?**

“Dealing with the death of a child in a classroom is not simply a matter of removing excess furniture. However, historically, many Schools have responded in just that way. When a child died, the desk was removed…these behaviours’ were supported by the misconception that children did not understand death, that they did not mourn and that they must be protected from the harsh reality…It is now a known and universally accepted fact that children grieve, mourn and understand death…their level of understanding is dependent upon their age and stage of development.”

*What Do We Do With The Empty Desk,*
Beyond the Innocence of Childhood
Margaret M. Metzgar, David W. Adams, Eleanor J. Deveau
1995
GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH THE STUDENT’S BELONGINGS

Senior Students:

- As these students usually have lockers, the locker will need to be cleaned out. Try to ensure that this is done when there are not any other students around.

- If the locker is shared with another student, speak to that student to get his/her input as to how this should be handled. (The individual may be needed to distinguish what belongs to whom).

- Take the student’s belongings to the office in a box and sort through anything that might belong to someone else and needs to be returned.

- Be wary of any items that might be needed for police investigation (if applicable). Police may ask that the student’s locker remain untouched until an investigation is completed on his/her belongings.

- When appropriate, return the student’s belongings to his/her family in person.

Elementary Students:

- Since elementary students often just have a desk most of his/her belongings will be located there.

- Do not remove the student’s desk immediately (see above quote).

- The desk should remain in the classroom until sufficient time has passed, allowing the class to grieve and then to discuss what they would like to do with the desk.

- Parents of the deceased student should be allowed input into “what do we do with the empty desk”.

- Gather student’s belongings from locker, gym, etc. Often peers would like a memento of the deceased but personal belongings must be kept for the family.

- Remove the student’s name from class lists, attendance lists and the computer. This will prevent any embarrassment by an unknowing substitute teacher checking attendance at the beginning of class.

- Be aware of items hanging on walls and bulletin boards as well.

- It may be appropriate to allow some things to be claimed by other students (at teacher’s discretion). For example students may wish to have artwork done by the deceased. Be sure to check this out with the family first.

- These activities provide other students with the opportunity to say “good-bye” to their classmate and teaches them that it is okay to talk about the deceased student.
WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE CLASSROOM?

1. Make the classroom a predictable place
   - Be clear about rules and expectations
   - Have the agenda on the board
   - Follow a routine

2. Give the child lots of notice or information about changes
   - Prepare them for what to expect in the new environment
   - Explain what behaviour is expected of them

3. Assist with transition
   - Recognize what transitions times are most difficult – recess, break time, lunch, music class
   - Prepare/remind the child of expected behaviour – be specific
   - Be available to the child before and after these times

4. Allow the child more time
   - More time for processing a situation
   - More time to respond to a question or a request
   - Walk away and give space
   - Know that the response may be different one day from the next

5. Be aware of triggers that cause children to feel unsafe
   - Learn what smells, sounds, circumstances trigger the child’s challenging behaviour.
     Avoid the triggers.
   - Be aware of your voice, your physical proximity, your posture
   - Avoid startling the child or putting them on the spot
   - Avoid yelling

6. Remember their tanks are often on empty: Fill their tanks.
   - Avoid “taking away” as much as possible
   - Comment on being courageous, and trying ie: the process and not the outcome
   - Get them to do what they are good at and teach others
   - Help them to see themselves in a different way – describe them as brave, kind, helpful
   - Engage with them on a personal level
   - Laugh with them, attempt spontaneous eye contact

7. Assist them with their emotions
   - Remember the emotion may not fit with the situation
   - Model listening
   - Give their feelings a name and acknowledge them – even when the behaviour is unacceptable
   - Assist them with ideas to manage their emotions
   - Avoid power battles
LIFE TREE

Directions: In the tree below, write in (and draw in, if necessary):

**Roots**: strengths you have used before

**Branches**: difficult tasks you have mastered

**Knots**: things that get in your way more than they help (example: temper)

**Leaves**: all people important to you now and in your past

*Put your tree in a place where you will see it frequently!*

School Crisis Survival Guide by Suni Petersen and Ron L. Straub.
PROCEDURES FOR A SCHOOL RESPONSE TO AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS:

**Sample School Response Team Membership List and Contact Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Response Team Members</th>
<th>Home Phone #</th>
<th>Cell Phone #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Support (ie: Counselling Consultant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Agency (if deemed appropriate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Staff Assignment List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>PERSON(S)</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiate School Emergency Plan</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather and Confirm Details</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for Injuries or Trauma</td>
<td>Those with training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Appropriate Agencies</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Director/Superintendent</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather records</td>
<td>Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Building</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm Attendance</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check Washrooms</td>
<td>Administrator/Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare Students</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Evacuation (First Aid Kit)</td>
<td>Administrator/Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign Volunteers</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Receiving Facility</td>
<td>Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle Phone Calls</td>
<td>Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle Media</td>
<td>Director/Superintendent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet Incoming Agencies</td>
<td>Division office support team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Response Team</td>
<td>(List members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Principal and/or designate will:

- notify Superintendents of School Services/Student Services or the Director of Education
- notify Student Support Services personnel (Coordinator of Integrated School Services)
- call an emergency staff meeting
- decide on information to be provided to students and community
- decide how information will be provided
- designate a room/area for Division-support team to meet with students and staff
- direct all media inquiries to the division office
- provide opportunity for debriefing after the event

Fire Evacuation Procedures

1. Engage the fire alarm and inform school office of location and extent of fire
2. All students must walk as rapidly as possible, without running or crowding, into the hall and out of the designated exit. Keep all students as far away as possible from the fire’s location.
3. Call 911, inform them of the nature, location and extent of fire, and direct them to the appropriate entrance.
4. See SCHOOL EVACUATION PROCEDURES.
5. Teachers will appoint a class monitor to lead students out of the building. Teachers will exit last, checking to make certain no students remain in the classroom or hallway – closing the classroom door as they exit.
6. Staff should be familiar with the location and operation of evacuation routes, fire extinguishers, including fire hoses, in the building. They may be used at staff discretion and only when safe to do so.
7. Assemble students and staff in previously determined places well away from the fire, leaving fire routes clear for emergency vehicles and personnel. Use predetermined alternate facility if required.
8. The teacher will take attendance once they are at a safe distance from the school. Ensuring that at least one teacher is with students at all times, a teacher will notify the office of any missing students.
9. Re-enter the building only after fire services have declared it safe. Debrief with students regarding the situation and their response.
10. Conduct fire drills as required by division policy.

School Evacuation Procedures

1. If an immediate emergency, engage fire alarm and follow fire evacuation procedures.
2. If evacuation is not immediately required, convene School Response Team.
3. Commence evacuation procedures.
4. Inform Superintendent of School Services
5. Teachers assigned to check washrooms or unsupervised spaces will do so prior to evacuating the building to ensure that all students have vacated the building.
6. Teachers should do a quick head count of their class.
7. Classes should be moved to the designated areas (Use predetermined alternate facility if required)
8. Teachers should proceed to their designated areas and take class attendance.
9. Teachers will notify the principal of all missing students.
**Notify emergency services of any absentees.**

10. All teachers without homerooms will meet in a designated spot to wait for assignments.
11. The principal will verify the evacuation of all staff.
12. Master list of all staff and students will be kept in a secure location (ie: Emergency Kit, alternate location, other school facility in that community)
13. Principal will contact the Transportation Department if students need to be transported to another school facility.
14. Principal will contact the Transportation Department if students need to be transported home.
15. Students can only be released to parent/guardian or bus driver (document who child goes with)
16. Students must be crossed off master list before they leave (task assigned to a staff member)
17. If extra people are needed the community’s Emergency Response Team will be contacted.
18. The names of all students or staff evacuated to hospital will be recorded.

**School and Perimeter Lock-down Procedures**

1. Initiate emergency communication procedures by announcing, “SCHOOL LOCK-DOWN” or “PERIMETER LOCK-DOWN” depending upon the emergency. Call 911 - establish RCMP contact.
2. **School Lock-Down** will alert all staff and students that an imminent danger exists within the school building and that they should secure themselves in designated locked areas and remain there until RCMP and/or school administration indicate that it is safe to leave. (Ensure that the school has a system to communicate immediately with all staff members inside the building as well as outside).
3. **Perimeter Lock-Down** will alert all staff and students that an emergency has happened near the school and requires an enhanced level of safety but the threat is outside the school. Exterior doors are locked and no one is allowed to enter or leave without the approval of RCMP and/or school administration.
4. Inform Superintendent of School Services as soon as reasonably safe to do so.
5. Classroom teachers (School Lock-Down):
   - Immediately gather all students in the halls into the classrooms, close and lock classroom doors
   - Lights should be turned off
   - Create a list of missing students and follow established predetermined ways to communicate this information to the office
   - Ensure all students are safe as possible – pull blinds/curtains, keep everyone facing away from the windows and doors as required, move desks in place as protective cover, students should be instructed to lay or sit on the floor, place a covering over all windows including door windows
6. NO student should leave the classroom for any reason during the lockdown. Staff should not chase students if they run from the classroom or school. Staff remain with the students in the classroom.
7. Students in open areas such as gymnasium/cafeteria should be moved to a previously designated safe area.
8. Other staff not assigned to a classroom are to reposition themselves out of view of windows and preferably in a predetermined locked room.
9. Once the school has been cleared of threat by the RCMP, either the RCMP and/or administrator will communicate to each classroom further instructions for all staff and students.
10. All media inquiries need to be directed to administration and/or division office. Students and staff should not comment to the media.
11. Under the direction of the Director of Education/Superintendent of School Services, prepare a fact sheet to respond to inquiries.
**Intruders at School**

a) If a person on school property is suspected of posing a threat, notify the office immediately.
b) The principal or designate shall determine whether the person is a legitimate visitor or poses a threat to school safety.
c) If the intruder is determined to be a threat, alert staff and students by announcing **SCHOOL LOCK-DOWN** through the school communication system.
d) Call 911
e) If the intruder refuses to leave, instruct teachers in contact with the intruder to take all steps to ensure their own safety and that of the students. **Do not engage in violent confrontation.**
f) If appropriate, administration should attempt to maintain direct observation of the intruder to monitor developments until the arrival of the RCMP.
g) When the incident is resolved, inform all staff and students.
h) Notify the Superintendent of School Services regarding the incident.
i) Under the direction of the Director of Education/Superintendent of School Services, prepare a fact sheet to respond to inquiries.

**Armed Intruders**

In response to school shootings in Canada and the United States, schools in the North East School Division want to be proactive in preparing for an armed intruder in our buildings. Due to the possibility of the armed intruder being familiar with the school building, this procedure is just a general guideline – schools should do a more specific plan that is not made public.

NOTE: An intruder with a weapon, whether using it or not, is treated as a clear threat to school safety. If it is a hostage situation, school personnel should focus on the safety of students and staff and leave negotiations to trained responders.

1. Anyone who detects another person with a weapon should immediately inform the office using the words “**armed intruder**” and indicate location in the building.
2. Follow procedures for **SCHOOL LOCK-DOWN**. Ensure that any potential victims are removed from the area if possible.
3. Call 911
4. Provide RCMP with as much information as possible - number of people involved, location (have school floor plan accessible), number and types of weapons, names and number of victims, names and location of staff/students who provided initial information regarding the armed intruder.
5. Inform classroom teachers through a previously established communication plan.
6. **DO NOT:**
   1. Evacuate the school until instructed to do so by the police.
   2. Attempt to remove the weapon(s) from the intruder.
   3. Attempt to negotiate with the intruder.
   4. Remove lock down until given clearance by the RCMP.
7. Under the direction of the Director of Education/Superintendent of School Services, develop a fact sheet to respond to inquiries and to assist with informing parents.
8. Use a previously established location for family members to wait and to be kept informed. This is the location to which the students will be released once clearance is given by the RCMP.
**Hostage Taking**

1. Alert the office immediately.
2. Call 911
3. Inform the Superintendent of School Services
4. Do not attempt to rescue hostages or threaten the perpetrator.
5. Gather as much information as reasonably possible (ie: information on perpetrator, weapons, explosives, etc)
6. Assess immediate danger to hostage and potential threat to others.
7. Follow procedures for ARMED INTRUDER or SCHOOL LOCK DOWN.

**Lost or Missing Child**

a) Inform the office of the missing child.

b) Office will ask available staff to meet at the office for a quick staff meeting. Please come immediately. If using the intercom, the code for this meeting will be……(establish a code to use). Ensure no class is left unattended. All teachers will check their class for extra children.

c) Staff not assigned to a classroom at this time, will also report to the office.

d) Available staff will check the unsupervised areas of the school, including washrooms.

e) Admin assistant will remain in the office.

f) An assigned staff member will check outside the building (ie: playground, parking lot, sheds)

g) Principal will coordinate other searchers if needed.

h) If student, is not located immediately - Call 911

i) Follow instructions of RCMP re: notification of parents, etc.

j) Notify Director of Education and Superintendent of School Services

**Bomb Threat**

The Principal or designate will:

1. Instruct anyone receiving a bomb threat to record the exact statement, terminology and expressions, whether caller is female or male, (all significant to note). Be calm, courteous, listen, do not interrupt. Try to keep them on the line and ask specific, relevant questions.

2. Press *69 immediately after call is terminated so that call can be traced

3. Call RCMP and report the threat - follow police instructions in regards to evacuation and searches

4. Request all personnel NOT to handle suspicious objects unless assistance is requested by the RCMP or Fire Department

5. Inform Director of Education and Superintendent of School Services
Severe Electrical Storm

The Principal or designate will direct students and/or staff to:

1. Find shelter in an enclosed building as soon as possible
2. Stay indoors
3. Stay away from open windows and doors, metal objects, electrical appliances and plumbing until the storm has passed
4. Leave the water during swimming events and go to the nearest shelter
5. Notify custodian for maintenance assistance as needed
6. Announce all clear

Tornado

The Principal or designate will:

1. Initiate the tornado drill immediately
2. Attend to student and staff safety
3. Notify the Director of Education/Superintendent of School Services
4. Announce all clear

Tornado Drill

The Principal or designate will:

1. Conduct a tornado drill a minimum of once a year.
2. Familiarize all staff and students with the school evacuation plan.
3. Transfer all students to a predetermined safe location close to a fire exit.
4. Instruct staff to direct students to sit knees up, head down, hands covering the head.
5. Signal for the Tornado Drill – ie: “Please follow severe storm procedures.”

Harassment/Assault Intervention

If you observe harassment/assault:

1. Identify yourself
2. Get someone to get another staff support
3. Use specific commands, (eg.) stop that (specific behavior)
4. Assist and support the victim physically and emotionally
5. Report the incident to the administration
If a student complains of harassment/assault/abuse:

1. Assess the severity of the complaint
2. Do not question the victim - just get facts you need and document the incident
3. Document the incident for appropriate agencies (RCMP and Social Services)
4. Report incident to office as soon as possible

**Street/Youth Gangs**

Gang is defined as “a group, consorting together, on a formal or informal regular basis, to engage in unlawful activity”. Reasons for youth involved in gangs include identity, protection, fellowship, intimidation.

Intervention:

A. In case of an emergency contact the RCMP.
B. If you have information about potential gang activity, recruitment, and/or involvement – contact the RCMP.
C. Promote anti-violence alternatives for resolving conflicts, peer mediation programs, peer counseling, esteem-building.
D. Become familiar with gang symbols and paraphernalia.
E. Maintain close communication with RCMP.
F. Provide support to staff and students affected by gang violence.

**Break-Ins/Vandalism**

Break-ins with resulting theft and/or vandalism often occur during the night. In most cases, the security system will be triggered resulting in action by the RCMP. If the occurrence is detected by you - call the Principal and the RCMP. **DO NOT DISTURB THE CRIME SCENE**

The Principal will:

1. Visit the site
2. Arrange all emergency repair.clean up
3. Inform Division Office – Superintendent of School Services or Facilities Manager
4. Compile a list of missing or damaged equipment/materials

**Wild Animals**

The Principal or designate will direct students and /or staff to:

1. A safe place.
2. Students and/or staff will be transferred in a calm manner (eg. school bell may be used if danger is in schoolyard during recess)
3. RCMP, Pest Control, & SERM will be notified
4. Medical assistance may be required.
**Hazardous Materials Incidents**

There are schools which may be at risk from the effects of hazardous or toxic material accidents in the community. Such accidents may result in the need to take immediate action. The level of action taken will depend on the proximity of the accident to the school, the wind velocity and direction, and the weather.

The main principals to be followed in order are to:
- Protect human life – “If it is safe to do so”
- Protect the environment – “If it is safe to do so”
- Protect the facility – “If it is safe to do so”

1. There are two basic actions: Evacuate students to a safe location upwind and away from the accident site, or seal the building (windows/doors), shut off air handling equipment and remain inside the building until the emergency has been resolved.
2. Emergency Response Unit will instruct the principal to take the action deemed most appropriate.
3. The Principal or designate will:
   a) Alert the custodian and teachers to shut off air handling equipment
   b) Alert staff to close windows and be prepared for emergency action.
   c) Admin assistant will stand by the telephone - office if possible.

**Natural Gas Leak**

If odor is detected in the building the Principal or designate will:

1. Notify Sask Energy 1-888-700-0427
2. Notify Division Office
3. Notify custodian/maintenance personal
4. If the odor persists after all doors and windows are opened and the facility is deemed unsafe, the Principal or designate will evacuate the building.

**Chemical Spills**

1. Staff member will:
   - evacuate affected area and isolate it against student or staff entry
   - check for injured parties
   - notify principal or designate
   - determine the hazard - unknown chemicals are to be treated as extremely hazardous and should be removed by appropriate agency (Fire Department)
   - follow established guidelines for controlling “low risk” materials, disposing of them, and decontaminating area (control the source of spill and contain to prevent entry into the storm or sanitary sewer, identify, absorb and neutralize where appropriate). MSD and WHMS sheets are housed in the (ie: janitor room and the Science Room).
   - prepare a report for Principal with a copy for the Director of Education
   - keep science door to materials locked at all times
2. The Principal or designate will:
   - notify the Fire Department where appropriate
   - attend to safety of students and staff – refer to STAFF ASSIGNMENTS
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Media Guidelines

A tragedy within a school raises anxiety which requires educators and members of the community to work in partnership to cope with the tragic event.

Specific Recommendations

- The Principal or his/her designate should assume responsibility for redirecting media who contact the school. All school personnel should be informed that all contacts from the media should be directed to administration. Under no circumstance should school staff provide information to the media. All formal media responses will be dealt with by the Director of Education and/or the Superintendent of School Services.

- The principal should attempt to gather as much factual information as possible. Factual information will help to decrease anxiety and dispel rumours. Care must be taken to avoid release of unauthorized information to school staff and/or students.

  Prepare a written script outlining the information that can be shared with staff and students.

- The Director of Education and/or Superintendent of School Services is in a position to give responsible information about the tragedy. When the spokesperson for the division is unavailable or perceived by the media as not open to communication, members of the media will turn to other sources of information such as students. This may be counterproductive to school personnel managing the tragic event and its aftermath.
Memorial Guidelines

Recommendations regarding Sudden Death:

It may be appropriate for the school to plan a response to a death within the school community. Particular sensitivity needs to be exercised with respect to the deceased’s/survivor’s cultural and religious background. The response could take several forms such as:

1. attendance at the funeral
2. acknowledgement at a regular scheduled school assembly (not recommended for death by suicide)
3. lower flag
4. moment of silence
5. yearbook recognition
6. memorial fund
7. donation/flowers
8. memory book for the family

Schools should have a policy re: memorials. Memorializing students who kill themselves can lead to an imitation effect. Even though there may be an overall policy on memorials in the school, suicide should be treated differently than sudden death in the school.

Recommendations regarding Suicidal Deaths:

- Students responses should be channelled into constructive projects to help the living.
- Contribute or donate funds to concerned agencies, such as a Crisis Centre.
- Customary Memorial activities may be questionable.
- Do not dedicate athletic events.
- No permanent memorial, i.e., plaques, planting a tree or dedicating a year book or establishing a scholarship fund. This has potential for constant invitation to consider suicide.
- Memorial assemblies can be too intense and difficult to manage.
SCHOOL MEMORIAL ADDRESS (NOT recommended for death by suicide)

This address is intended to focus on the value of the life lived and to provide accurate factual information. Before composing this address, it is sometimes helpful to meet briefly with a few staff and students to hear their thoughts about the person. Reviewing the student's records and speaking to a previous school's teachers might be helpful as well. After delivering the address, you may wish to send a typed copy with a letter of sympathy to the parents. File a copy in the student's records as well.

The components in a memorial address may be:

- **Explanation** that this is a special address regarding the death of a member of your school community. The address should be brief with a minute of silence observed at the end.
- **Clarification of facts**: name, age, grade level, date and manner of death. If the manner of death is being investigated (i.e. murder, suicide), consult with the police regarding what can be shared.
- **Background of the Student**: names of schools recently attended, extra-curricular activities, hobbies, favourite subjects, part time jobs, etc.
- **Personal remarks**: relay some of the positive remarks of staff/students. The deceased will always be remembered— if there is no personal information, speak in general terms about the loss of a young life and the value of the brief time spent together.
- **Concluding Remarks**: recognize the emotions arising from the situation, the need to support one another, that expressions of grief are normal and the importance of recognizing the value of the person's life.

RECOGNIZING THE INDIVIDUAL(S)

Students, teachers, parents and sometimes other interest groups will express their desire to recognize the individual(s) involved in the tragic event. People have a need to show that they care, and it is important to provide appropriate opportunities within schools to demonstrate this caring in a positive way. Assemblies, cards to the family involved, a book of memories and tribute in a newsletter are some of those ways. As students, staff and community look for ways to express their feelings, they should be aware of the wishes of the family involved, and the recommended procedures or protocol around particular tragic events. As one provides direction to the many groups a school serves, it sometimes becomes necessary to educate those groups about what not only could be done, but in some cases, what will be done. Recognizing an individual(s) involved in a tragic event should be accomplished in a supportive and sensitive manner, and that sometimes requires considerable dialogue.
MEMORIALS AND THE FUNERAL (SUICIDE)

There needs to be a balance maintained between supporting the grieving process and the avoidance of glamorizing or sensationalizing the suicide. Maintaining this balance is a particularly delicate issue as the school decides on appropriate commemorative activities. Often the school’s customs with regard to student deaths will provide a baseline for the decision. Memorial activities should be carefully considered. For example, if it is the custom to fly the flag at half-staff or have a moment of silent prayer then this activity is all right.

Some memorial activities are questionable, even if customary. Do not dedicate an athletic event, dance or other school activity to the deceased student. Establishing any kind of permanent memorial such as a plaque, planting a tree, dedicating the year book, or establishing a scholarship fund has the potential for becoming a constant invitation to consider suicide. Memorial assemblies can be too intense and difficult to manage. Grieving students may be persistent in their efforts to honour the memory of the deceased friend. School personnel should understand and explain these responses as part of the grief process and channel the students' energies into constructive projects to help the living. If funds are collected, they may be offered to the family to help with funeral expenses or donated to a community agency such as a crisis centre.

All students wishing to attend the funeral should be encouraged to do so, with parental permission. Funerals play an important role in helping people to accept the reality of death. They provide rituals for the shared experience of grief. Encourage parents to accompany their children and be available to discuss the experience with them. Many students will be anxious about the funeral and this can be a topic for individual and group counselling to prepare for the emotional impact. The opportunity should also be provided for individual and group support after the funeral. The school or the teachers should not assume responsibility for taking students to the funeral home, church or cemetery. A funeral service held after regular school hours minimizes the disruption of the regular school schedule. If this is not the choice of the family and the funeral is held during school hours, the school should stay open for those students who choose not to attend. Provision should be made for teachers and administrators to attend.
Grief

Understanding Grief

Mourning and the complex stages of the grieving process are necessary. Even though the present is felt to be intolerably painful, it is healthy and normal for a bereaved person to experience intense emotions and swift mood changes. These are natural reactions to loss. It takes time to heal. The period of grieving depends upon the situation and varies greatly from person to person. Grieving is not a weakness; it is a necessity.

The Stages of Grieving

There are many different stages of grieving. The three stages outlined below are ones which most people will experience. However, people do not usually flow from the first stage through to the last in a logical order. Some people will jump back and forth between stages. The length of time it takes to go through the different stages will vary.

Stage I: Numbness or Shock –
Immediately after news of death, you will likely experience a period when you feel very little except a sense of unreality. Some people have described this period as being enclosed in a cocoon, or as “sleepwalking”, through the funeral and necessary details which follow death. This stage may last for several weeks or several months.

Stage II: Disorganization –
Eventually, nature’s protective shock begins to wear off, and feelings begin to come alive again. You may have some physical symptoms such as tightness in the throat, shortness of breath, the need to sigh frequently and extreme fatigue. Emotional symptoms can be even more distressing. Anger at the loved one for dying and the accompanying guilt may be overwhelming. You need to review the life of the deceased person and the events leading up to the actual death. You may agonize over things you believe you did wrong or things you think you should have done for the deceased. Most frightening of all can be the feeling of losing emotional control. It is a painful period of emotional upheaval but a normal and necessary part of grieving. Most people will recover but it can take weeks, months or, to some degree, several years.

Stage III: Re-organization –
Eventually, there will be periods when you do not dwell on your loss, and you can focus on daily tasks. A great hurt is never completely forgotten; rather, it takes its place among life’s other, more immediate demands. You may have a new awareness of the preciousness of life and of the value of people and experiences.

Canadian Mental Health Association online resource:
http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/grieving/
HOW TO COPE WITH YOUR OWN GRIEF

Be with caring people.

Take enough time (It is hard to estimate a “normal” grieving period; it will probably take longer than you expect).

Express your feelings (Let yourself feel sadness, anger and other feelings and find a way to express them).

Accept a changed life (Your routines may need to change – this is a natural outcome of loss and grief).

Reach out for help (Let people know when you need companionship and support).

Take care of your physical health (Speak with your doctor if you feel your grief is affecting your health).

Support others in their grief (Offer support to other family members and friends who are grieving).

Come to terms with your loss.

Make a new beginning (As the sense of grief becomes less intense, return to interests and activities).

Postpone major life changes (Consider waiting a year or so before making big decisions).

Do You Need More Help? If you are bereaved and feel you need more assistance than friends and family can provide, contact a community organization, such as mental health or private counsellor.

Canadian Mental Health Association online resource: http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/grieving/
GRIEF REACTIONS BY AGE AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

There is a wide variability in children's responses; even from those of the same age, but essentially to the level of cognitive development determines how a person views death.

5-9 Years

Children fear personification of death -- skeletons and ghosts, fear of graveyards, haunted houses, "bad" people, but believe the spirit still lives. Talk openly to clear up misconceptions and lessen fears. Reassure children that they will be looked after and accept that their level of conceptual understanding necessitates a concrete view of death.

10-14 Years

Children are beginning to understand and accept a mature realistic explanation of death as final and inevitable. They are developing their independence from parents but are not yet fully established individuals. Consequently, a death, especially of a peer, can cause considerable distress based on a fear for their own security: They may refuse to believe they are mortal.

Teach:

1. It is normal to feel sad, angry, and lonely.
2. It is all right to cry openly and talk about a death.
3. It is appropriate to recognize that grief is painful but that it is important to "move on".

15-18 Years

Teens are beginning to understand the issues of war, abortion, suicide, etc. They are moving to a more abstract level of thinking and yet their tendency is to react, especially in the death of a peer, in a highly dramatic, intense fashion with a reliance on personalized rituals, symbols, etc. Their energy can appear to come in great spurts and their responses can be unpredictable.

Adult

The variety of grief responses in adults is extensive largely due to how previous losses have or have not been resolved. Although adult cognition allows an older person to reason abstractly, the degree to which personal support systems (i.e., friends, religion, etc.) are firmly in place can determine the nature of their grief.

At the same time, adults have at their disposal a large variety of strategies which they can use to avoid grieving. The perceived need to remain "in control" often causes adults to circumvent the natural grief process. Unhealthy responses include such behaviours as:

- over-activity with no apparent sense of grief
- inertia and indecisiveness
- suppression of feelings
- developing the deceased's symptoms
- increased frequency of real physical disease
- self-defeating behaviour - depression

Colleagues should be watchful of distorted grief responses and supportive and caring of their co-workers as they move through the grief process – together.
AGE LEVEL AND PERCEPTIONS OF DEATH

The age of a child and a perception of death must be taken into consideration when developing your crisis plan. The developmental, not the chronological, age of the child is the critical factor. If your school has developmentally impaired children, you must remember that it is their age of understanding, not their chronological age that determines their reactions to a tragedy. On the other hand, the intellectual understanding of gifted students far exceeds their emotional ability to cope with death.

If a child is chronologically six years old but has a developmental age of nine, he is emotionally six and intellectually nine. A six-year-old child does not have the emotional capacity to cope well with a real knowledge of death’s finality and usually does not believe the deceased is gone forever. If this six-year-old is intellectually advanced he will understand the concept of death’s finality but will not have the emotional strength to cope. Because of this, he will need direction both in helping to build sufficient coping mechanisms and in finding a sense of meaning in the death.

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN AGE GROUP

A child below the age of five usually has no understanding of the finality of death. The pain of grief is in the separation. Today’s children of five have grown up watching Saturday morning cartoons where the characters routinely undergo physical bludgeoning one minute and return unscathed the next.

Death and its finality is not a reality.

The five-year-old child who has suffered a traumatic loss will re-experience the grief again at about age eight when the concept of finality is understood. The child then knows the deceased are NEVER coming back. If a class has experienced a major tragedy in those early years, or even a less traumatic loss, it may be helpful to discuss the loss once or twice when this finality is understood. The discussion can be used to validate the earlier experience and identify how different students handled the situation. This approach builds confidence in the students about their ability to cope when serious problems arise.

When Brenda was three years old, she saw her father shoot and kill her mother. Her father went to prison and Brenda went to live with her grandmother in another state. She was treated in therapy for the trauma and for many years functioned very well. Then, in the third grade, she began to have nightmares again and both her grades and behaviour in school deteriorated. Brenda was beginning to understand more completely how permanent the death of her mother really was. With counselling she soon regained her equilibrium and continued to do well.

Communicating with the young child

It is imperative for adults to be absolutely clear when communicating with a child of this age group. They are extremely concrete in their thinking and the words they hear are taken literally. "Rest in peace" becomes equated with sleep and "eternal rest" sounds boring to a five-year-old child. Clear communication is especially important concerning the events surrounding the funeral and the viewing of the body. Whatever the young child sees and hears is subject to literal interpretation. One young child attending her grandfather’s funeral noticed the blanket of flowers across the closed half of the casket and asked her mother, "Why did they cut Grandpa’s legs off?"

Young children also possess a graphic vision of life after death. When asked to consider the needs of a person after death, children of this age respond with:

- "The box they are buried in keeps them warm."
- "They are fed in heaven."
- "In heaven you can eat all the ice cream you want and never get sick."
- "In heaven people sleep on clouds because they’re so soft."

SIX TO EIGHT YEAR AGE GROUP

During the years, six to eight, the child is developmentally tackling the concept of living and non-living things. Anyone who has worked with children of this age is well aware of an almost morbid curiosity about death. This is the age when children will stick a pin in a bug and watch how long it crawls before it drops. After a period of time, one child may exclaim, "He’s still dead!” and for that child a great discovery has been made. The themes in their play reveal their preoccupation with life and death. They are earnestly trying to grasp the reality of death and its finality.
FASCINATION WITH RITUAL AND DETAIL

At this age, ritual is so fascinating that even in the event of a tragedy; the child's interest becomes immersed in all the arrangements. He can be very distraught one minute and in the next, occupy himself with probing questions about what will happen at the funeral and whether worms will eat the body when it is buried. Adults are frequently put off by these seemingly disrespectful remarks.

You may wish to explain this outlook. to parents and teachers so they do not inadvertently discourage communication. A child of this age has no reluctance to discuss death or its aftermath but he quickly senses from the adult world the non-verbal signals requesting him to keep quiet. If the adults in that child’s world are uncomfortable with the type of questions he asks or if they disregard them as inconsequential, he will stop questioning and be forced to resolve, in isolation, the trauma that the death presents.

Eight to Twelve year Age Group

Until this age, the grief a child feels from a death relates to the separation of the moment "I miss my mom because she’s not with me." The thought has not occurred to the child that he will never see Mom again. The child of eight, however, begins to understand the finality of death. The grief he now feels, in addition to the separation of the moment, is from the pain of knowing death is forever.

Egocentric thinking patterns predominate in this age group and result in "magical thinking". As a result of this self-centered thinking, the child infers he has more control over his world than is humanly possible. He believes that his wishes can come true and that the actions in which he engages CAUSE the events in his life. Adults know that other people react to their behaviour, but they also know that their behaviour is not the CAUSE of the reaction. A child does not perceive this subtle difference.

A child, for example, will walk on his mother's rug with muddy feet and his mother will get angry and reprimand him. The reprimand is a consequence. The mother had the choice to react in many different ways but chose the anger and reprimand. The mother could have nostalgically remembered such a day in her own childhood and laughed at seeing her son in the same situation. Although the mother had the choice, the child feels he made his mother angry.

Many educators have seen the child whose family is separating. The child creates crisis after crisis because he quickly learns that when he causes enough commotion, his mom and dad talk to each other without fighting. His acting-out serves the function of holding the family together for a brief period. Ultimately this does not work because his behaviour, whether good or bad, will not mend the marriage any more than it will create the divorce. In the aftermath, though, the child interprets the sequence of events to mean he has caused the divorce. He believes, "If I wasn’t so bad, Mom and Dad would be together".

The same thought pattern appears when a death occurs, especially the death of a sibling. Very few children go through life without occasionally wishing to be the only child in the family. Sibling relationships in middle childhood years are often love-hate relationships. Many children have at one time or other wished a brother or sister dead. If that death becomes a reality, the child feels guilty. Because of his own egocentric thinking, the child believes he caused the death by his wishful thinking. He consequently also feels responsible for the pain his parents are experiencing. It is this sense of responsibility and the guilt it creates that make it imperative these children be given plenty of opportunity to discuss the death.
GRIEF COUNSELLING: TEENAGE GRIEF

Q: In the past six months we have had five teenagers in our town die in tragic accidents. Three were killed in a one car accident, one died of suicide, and another died from cystic fibrosis. I don't know very much about adolescent grief responses. Can you help me?

A: The death of a loved one during the teenage years can have a tremendous impact on a teenager’s personality development, psychological well-being and academic achievement. This article will offer you information on the current research on adolescent physical responses, feelings and needs after the loss of a parent, sibling or friend.

Responses to loss

Some of the physical responses adolescents have experienced are: loss of appetite, stomach pains, headaches, tense/painful muscles or joints, a general feeling of not being "well", and sleep disturbances. Adolescents reported that their dreams were repetitive, frightening and nightmarish. Their dreams made them feel more vulnerable. Some adolescents even felt persecuted by their dreams. In one study parents/guardians frequently reported their children missed school because they did not feel well. However, they rarely connected their child's physical complaints and emotional distress to grief responses.

The emotional responses of adolescents seem to be intense in the beginning and then apparently diminish over time. Initially, adolescents reported feeling dazed, shocked, confused, numb, lonely, afraid, sad, frustrated, depressed and sometimes relieved. They felt fearful or guilty, i.e.: they were afraid of dying, were uncomfortable when happy and many times felt over-protected by parents, anger at God, a profound sense of powerlessness/helplessness, and were angry or irritable. Some adolescents reported having suicidal thoughts and decreased feelings of self-worth.

Some adolescents, in response to feeling different from their friends withdrew from social activities. Many adolescents reported not having a friend to talk with about their feelings and experiences surrounding their loss. Less time was spent with friends and more time was spent alone. Other adolescents become over-involved with their friends, spend little time home, and engage in risk-taking behaviours involving drugs, alcohol, unprotected sex or risky activities that might lead to their own death.

When an adolescent felt he/she could not have support from their family, they withdrew from them as well. The family’s ability to be cohesive and communicate plays an important role in supporting an adolescent after a death. Adolescents in families who do not communicate well with each other often were marked with emotional distance and reported feeling confused, guilty, and angry. It is suggested in the literature that adolescents use avoidance when talking about their feelings in an effort to soothe and comfort their parents as well as to keep from feeling overwhelmed with their own thoughts and feelings. Some adolescents reported they felt their parents would never get over the death of a sibling.

Research has identified significant relationship between the age of bereaved adolescents who had lost a parent and school performance. Average grades dropped in adolescents 15 and under. Adolescents reported difficulty in concentration, preoccupation in thinking and missing school which may have contributed to poor school performance.

Religion, for many adolescents becomes increasingly more important. Many adolescents questioned their religious upbringing as they struggled to answer the questions of "why my brother/sister, why not me?" While the meaning of death is an abstract concept, adolescents did not have difficulty in understanding the full impact of the death of their sibling. They struggled more with why the death occurred, coping with their anger at its occurrence, questioning their religious upbringing and trying to determine "why did it happen to me?" All expressed a strong sense of guilt over their relationship with the sibling who had died, how they had handled themselves during the illness and the death of their sibling, and readiness to blame themselves for anything that might go wrong. Survivor guilt, excessive concerns for others, and fears of intimacy are consistent themes among some adolescents.
How Adolescents Cope With Death

There appears to be two types of coping styles or paths that evolve after the death of a loved one. Some adolescents actively cope with their grief by talking about it with others, receiving and giving comfort to others, engaging in physical activity, visiting the grave or focusing on memories which play tribute to the deceased. Others were more passive. They used avoidance and isolated themselves to keep from experiencing their feelings or emotions of grief or the grief of others.

Over time adolescents reported feeling an enduring sense-of depression and sadness. Adolescents are less likely to express guilt and self-blame after the first 18-36 months after the loss, but still reported some degree of physical and emotional responses to loss up to 18-24 months after the loss. Some adolescents engaged in greater risk-taking in a search for activities to occupy time. Still others established deep, serious relationships early. Several siblings reported an inability to discuss their experiences during the death and dying of their sibling until years later. Only after they would established a deep trusting relationship were they able to share feelings they couldn't share with their friends at the time of death.

Outcomes

A positive result of loss during adolescence is that for some there was an impetus for psychological growth. They felt they gained an understanding of the meaning of life they wouldn't have gained otherwise, and increased sense of strength, self-reliance and independence, acceptance of death as a part of the reality of life, enhanced spirituality, a greater caring for friends and loved ones, a strengthening of emotional bonds with others~ increased empathy for others, better communication skills. There was also a perception that they were more mature than their peers.

Negative outcomes following bereavement are shifts in self-concept and self-esteem. There appears to be a relationship between sibling bereavement, low self-concept and emotional/behavioural difficulties. These findings indicate that time alone does not heal grief. It seems then, some adolescents are able to cope successfully with the death of a sibling and others become vulnerable to long-term negative outcomes.

How to Help an Adolescent

Clearly, keeping lines of communication open with the teenager, creating opportunities for them to talk to someone about their experiences with friends, school, and other activities after the death is extremely important for them to feel supported and to give a caregiver a sense of how they are doing.

Help the teen to find someone who may be able to help them sort through their thoughts and feelings which may seem overwhelming, such as an empathetic adult who has had a loss, pastor/priest/rabbi, or therapist to help them with their "grief work".

Buying a diary or journal to record feelings, poetry or prose can also be helpful in the expression of feelings. Encourage physical activity and adequate rest/sleep.
Suicide Completion, Attempts and Pro-Active Roles

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO A SUICIDE ATTEMPT OR THREAT

The purpose of this guideline is to outline specific procedures as to "who" is to do "what", "where", and "when", if there is any risk of suicide.

Priority is:

(1) Safety of the student,
(2) Communication with those in a position to help
(3) Referral, treatment and follow-up

Each fall - at initial staff meetings, administrators must share information with staff regarding potential warning signs for suicide and review division guidelines for responding.

Suicide Threat

☐ Regardless of the degree of risk perceived to be involved, the staff member in receipt of the information or who has developed uneasy feelings regarding a student should share that information with his/her school administrator immediately.
☐ The school administrator will notify the parents/guardians. This should be done in consultation with the Counselling Consultant. Information may also be acquired from the Outreach Worker.
☐ If there is reason to believe that the means to commit suicide has been brought to school, it may be considered grounds for search of the student or a search of the student's locker.
☐ The student should not leave the school unless accompanied by a parent/guardian, or a person clearly designated by the parent/guardian.
☐ A parent/guardian or designated school personnel could transport the student to the hospital for assessment and/or possible admission. Under extreme circumstances it may be appropriate to call the RCMP.
☐ Designated school personnel should follow-up the next day with the parent/guardians to determine what action has been taken, and to identify the role of the school.
☐ All action taken should be chronologically documented.
☐ The Coordinator of Integrated School Services should be contacted if additional support or interventions are required.

Suicide Attempts

☐ The person who discovers the situation should immediately dial 911 and follow the instructions given until appropriate help arrives
☐ The school administrator will be notified as soon as possible
☐ The school administrator will contact the student's parents/guardians.
☐ A staff member should accompany the student to the hospital and remain with the student until a parent or guardian arrives.
☐ The school administrator will contact the Coordinator of Integrated School Services to jointly decide the need to activate the Tragic Events Response Plan.

NOTE:

At no time is a student at risk to be left alone.
All information should be considered confidential and is to be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
The School’s Role after a Suicide Attempt

Although the school is not in a position to offer therapy it can provide a post-crisis support.

a) Regardless of the degree of intensity of the suicide threat or the action taken in a suicide attempt there will be a degree of awkwardness experienced by the student when he/she returns to school. A transition plan may help ease the student’s move back into school.

b) The school administrator in consultation with the Counselling Consultant will coordinate post-crisis support.
   A plan should be developed with student, parents, Student Support Services personnel and applicable community support services.

c) In development of a post crisis support plan, a student’s right to confidentiality shall be respected. Safety concerns override confidentiality.

d) There should be discussions with classroom teachers concerning the student’s return to class. In general, the academic expectations for the student should remain the same as for other students.

e) Students who have been identified as at-risk or who have attempted suicide should continue to be monitored to identify any at-risk behaviour and communicate the concern to the parent/guardian and applicable Student Support Services personnel as soon as possible.

f) Regular monitoring of the at-risk student should be undertaken with discretion to ensure that this process is not an added source of stress for the student.

g) Administrators must ensure that the school is positively reinforcing the post crisis support plan.

h) Teachers and administrators need to continue to monitor the impact of a suicide attempt on the school community in the weeks and months post-crisis.

i) The Coordinator of Integrated School Services should be contacted if additional support or interventions are required.
Proactive Supports When Dealing With the Issue of Suicide

I. What are some premises (rationales) for involving the school in dealing with suicide?

- Suicide is an increasing problem in our society.
- There are certain signs/indicators that students may exhibit if they are at risk for suicide.
- The school can play several roles in the prevention and identification of suicide: perhaps not necessarily direct roles, but often indirect roles.
- The topic of suicide can often be incorporated into school curricula.
- Our schools are addressing the potential risks of suicide. This may not be evident because it is part of helping students to maintain sound mental health. Providing supportive teachers and counsellors who are willing to take intervention action is part of a preventative role of schools. Helping students to recognize and learn to cope with the demands of life is an integral part of developing resilient people for the longer term.
- There are community agencies with which school personnel can work or to which they can make referrals.
- Teachers often become the forefront in terms of becoming aware of situations in their students’ lives. They are often privy to information and observations which parents may not recognize (or may deny) or which children and adolescents may not reveal in the home setting.

II. What are some common signs to watch for as possible at-risk? (Some may be more age specific.):

- Loss or change in their life such as a death or change in family dynamics;
- Low tolerance for frustration or stress;
- Expressing a preoccupation with death (in comments, writings, drawings, social interactions);
- Inability to concentrate, think rationally;
- Complaints of physical problems: headaches, abdominal pains;
- Making amends or suddenly settling disagreements/conflicts;
- Isolation or lack of social support;
- Withdraws from activities;
- Giving away valued possessions;
- Makes [low] self-esteem comments of worthlessness/hopelessness;
- Sudden changes in behaviour;
- Sudden changes in appearance;
- Anger, hostility, aggression, rage;
- Sudden academic decline;
- Drug/alcohol use/abuse;
- Relationship problems: family, peer, romantic
- Family history of suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Gender or sexually diverse students;
- Psychological and mental health disorders, in particular, mood disorders;
III. What are the roles of administrators?

- Ensure school staff is familiar with Guidelines for Responding to a Suicide Threat or Attempt.
- Establish a school response team for responding to suicide attempts or acts at the school.
- Detection and assessment of at-risk students (teachers should have an idea of a student’s baseline behaviour which is useful to determine possible at-risk indicators (warning signs).
- Designate school personnel to serve as liaisons between the school and other agencies/resources.
- Respond to the needs of students experiencing difficulties.
- Utilize student peer information as one source (along with others) in referring students.
- Recognize that since some families are not capable of dealing with issues, the school may become the initial responder to concerns.
- Foster positive, safe and secure school environments.
- Work as a team by networking with other agencies and resources.
- Create an awareness and understanding of suicide through education: programs for students and staff (which also may include parents and community).
- Recognize and address the lack of support services (such as peer, family, etc.).

IV. What can be expected of teachers?

- Teachers are great observers. They can become familiar with general signs of possible risk for suicide.
- Teachers who have concerns need to notify administration who in turn will consult with the counselling consultant in order to determine an appropriate referral to outside agencies.
- Where there is an opportunity, teachers may want to consider incorporating this topic in their programs. Since the topic of suicide may be too dramatic or uncomfortable on its own, it can be addressed through the areas of maintaining sound mental and emotional health. The school counsellor and/or community agencies can often provide both written and personal resources.
- The involvement of families [parents/guardians] is necessary.
- Teachers teach students coping skills which are transferable to outside of the school environment.
Youth Suicide: Warning Signs

The importance of recognizing warning signs is crucial. People under stress or those who have experienced crisis/trauma situations do provide clues that indicate they are hurting and in trouble.

Researchers believe that most suicidal individuals convey their intentions to someone in their network of friends, family, or peers, either openly or covertly. These people are intimately and extensively in contact with a particular suicidal adolescent. They are probably in the best position to recognize the signs and render help.

No one profile or check list exists for identifying a suicidal adolescent. Suicide, like much of human behaviour, is difficult to predict. Despite experts' best efforts, even they cannot say, if or when, a person will attempt suicide. But they have identified several warning signs which, particularly in combination, demand immediate concern and attention.

The following list of warning signs is not all inclusive, but they provide a basis for what to look for in potentially suicidal adolescents:

1. **Suicidal threats.** Suicidal threats can be classified into two categories: (a) veiled/disguised threats and (b) specific desire-to-die threats. Veiled/disguised threats may include "sometimes I just want it to be over with", "I can't take it any more" or "the world would be better off without me". These veiled/disguised threats are like little teasers - but they must be heard.

   Specific desire-to-die statements leave no doubt about the adolescent's intentions. Examples of such statements could be; "I'm going to kill myself" or "I'm going to commit suicide". These direct threats require immediate attention. Direct threats require referral to competent mental health professionals. People who talk about suicide do attempt suicide and do commit suicide.

2. **Sudden changes in behaviour.** This category of suicidal warning signs reflects the concept that people behave according to how they feel about themselves. When adolescents are experiencing stress, problems, and traumatic events in their lives, their behaviour changes.

   Changes in eating behaviour are common. Often adolescents dramatically increase/decrease the amount of food they eat.

   Changes in sleeping behaviour may be another warning sign. Adolescents may sleep an inordinate amount of time. Excessive sleeping allows them to avoid stress and conflicts. Insomnia is another warning sign of people in stress.

   Adolescents considering suicide will often change their style of dress and personal appearance.

   Personal hygiene and grooming reflect feelings of depression and low self-esteem. Educators, parents, and peers are in an excellent position to observe these changes.

   Suicidal adolescents often demonstrate changes relative to activities that once were important to them. They become disinterested and drop out of these activities.

3. **Depression and isolation.** Depression in adolescence is often expressed by changes in behaviour. The depression may be demonstrated by adolescents choosing isolation from friends and family. One of the difficulties in perceiving adolescent depression is the fact that adolescents often show depression in ways that are different from adults. The adolescents who are displaying acts of defiant, aggressive and rebellious behaviour may be expressing their depression.

4. **Giving away valued possessions.** In some cases suicidal adolescents will give valued possessions to their friends.
5. **Making amends.** Another warning sign revolves around "getting their house in order", and taking care of unfinished business. Adolescents will often patch up old quarrels and make amends for past mistakes. Such behaviour is particularly alarming when other warning signs also are present.

6. **Previous suicide attempts.** Adolescents who have made serious suicide attempts are at the highest risk for actually killing themselves.

7. **A loss in their life.** A loss in adolescence is often a contributing factor to suicidal behaviour. The loss may include the break-up of a love relationship, death of a family member, or the loss of a parent through separation or divorce. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable at times of geographical movement and separation from friends.

   Adolescents may have a concept of death that is different from the adult concept of death. As people continue to have longer life expectancies many young people will not have experienced the death of grandparents and/or other family members. They don't comprehend the finality of death.

8. **Drug and/or alcohol use.** Adolescents who use drugs and/or alcohol are a greater risk for suicidal behaviour.

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**“AT RISK” STUDENTS**

*(After Suicidal Death)*

Immediately following a completed suicide there may be other students and adults in the school and community who become suicidal themselves.

**Probable “High Risk” Students After Suicidal Death:**

*Students who:*

- Participated in any way with the completed suicide: helped write the suicide note, provided the means, involved in a suicide pact, etc.
- Knew of the plans but kept it a secret.
- Were siblings or other relatives, best friends, girlfriend/boyfriend.
- Are a self-appointed therapist.
- Have a history of suicidal threats/attempts themselves.
- Identified with the victim's situation.
- Have reason to feel guilty about things they had said or done to the student prior to the suicide.
- Are desperate for any reason who now see suicide as a viable alternative, i.e. depressed.
- Observed events which they later learned were indicative of the victim's suicidal intent.
- Who have experienced sudden or traumatic losses in their own life, i.e., death, divorce.
What is Trauma?

1. When an actual or perceived threat of danger overwhelms a child’s usual coping ability.
2. Examples of trauma may include a parental death, physical or sexual abuse, exposure to family violence, exposure to parental drinking, a single incident event (e.g. getting lost), or a natural disaster.
3. The child’s resiliency is affected by: biopsychosocial history, temperament, level of development, the context in which the event occurred, and the support available from attachment figures.
4. Chronic traumatizing events can compromise all areas of child development: identity formation, cognitive processing, experience of body integrity, ability to manage behaviour, affect tolerance, spiritual and moral development, ability to trust others.
5. Children’s coping skills are determined by: age, verbal abilities, strength, mobility, freedom, experience, and available attachment figures.


Consequences of Trauma

1. Persistent Fear State
   - The experience of the traumatized child includes fear, threat, unpredictability, frustration, chaos, hunger and pain.
   - Fight, Flight and Freeze are immediate automatic survival responses that serve to protect body/brain from harm.
   - Fight response: crying, tantrums, aggression.
   - Physical Flight/Dissociation: Flight not often possible for children, may look like avoidance/"illness"/excuses.
   - Freezing: provides camouflage and time to process/evaluate a situation (commonly perceived as oppositional – defiant).
   - Responsive behaviors may include: hypervigilance, heightened startle response, increased irritability, anxiety, physical hyperactivity, regressive behaviors.

2. Disorder of Memory
   - Severe traumatizing experiences are not processed and stored in the memory the same way as other events.
   - They are not integrated with past experiences – separate and partly/fully out of consciousness.
   - Re-experiencing of the trauma may occur (flashback):
     1. Stimulated by similar affective states (fear combined with helplessness)
     2. Sensory experiences (smell or loud voice)
     3. Behavioral interactions (a whispered threat, a spanking)
     4. Specific objects (knife, beer can)
   - In school age children a flashback may look like a sudden out of context intensely emotional episode that the child may not be able to explain.
   - Dissociation protects the traumatized child from overwhelming emotions, thoughts, sensations and allows them to function in their environment, but it is maladaptive.
   - All of us experience this and it can be adaptive (driving, absorbed in music, losing track of time and space).
- Symptoms of trauma related memory disorganization can easily be misinterpreted when seen in children as lying, unexplained aggression, withdrawal, or weird spacey behaviour.

3. Dysregulation of Affect

- Intrusive, spontaneous affective recollections of trauma that children attempt to control or prevent by numbing and affect avoidance.
- Characterized by constricted affect interspersed with out-of-control outbursts.
- Difficult for the child to describe or predict their own emotional reactions and this makes it difficult to learn from their emotional experiences (Alexithymia).
- Related behaviors may include oppositional behaviour, defiant, uncooperative, anxious, depressed, impulse-ridden, and unpredictable behaviour.
- These children can be learning disabled and verbal and non-verbal cues are often misinterpreted.

4. Avoidance of Intimacy

- Intimacy is often avoided by traumatized children because in their experience, emotional closeness leads to: vulnerability and lack of control.
- Very difficult to parent children who actively avoid intimacy and resist dependency.
- Intimacy avoidance extends to other adults in the child’s life as well. They may have aversions to physical or emotional closeness, be guarded, hyperactive, controlling or pseudo-mature.
- Other intimacy avoidance behaviors may include: clingy, avoidance of eye contact, withdrawal, oppositional behaviour, and disgusting personal habits.

RESPONSES TO AND RECOVERY FROM ACCIDENTS AND TRAUMATIC EVENTS

The sudden and unexpected serious injury or death of a co-worker or friend can create an overwhelming feeling of helplessness. Reactions can have an impact on our body as well as our thoughts and feelings.

Common physical reactions include
1. a feeling of numbness and fatigue
2. increased heart rate, shortness of breath, dry mouth
3. nausea and upset stomach
4. tremors of hands, lips and eyes
5. muscle and headaches

Changes in our thoughts may include
- poor concentration and attention span; memory loss
- disturbing images and mental pictures
- difficulty in making even small decisions
- self-blame or blaming others

Our feelings and emotions may result in
- guilt for what we did or did not do
- anger about what happened
- fear and worry about the impact of the event
- irritability and restlessness
- sadness and grief
- a sense of detachment and abandonment.

These changes may alter the way we behave and lead to
- doubting ourselves and others
- withdrawing from others or becoming more aggressive
- increased alcohol, food and smoking intake
RESPONSES TO TRAUMA AFFECT / MANY ASPECTS OF HUMAN FUNCTIONING

Signs of responses to trauma can be deceiving because the symptoms may vary:

- in intensity and can be attributed to other causes
- in the different areas of functioning so they are “scattered about” in the body, and
- among individuals so it is difficult to compare one’s responses to those of others.

Conceptualizing the Different Areas of Responses to Trauma

One way to conceptualize the different areas of human functioning is to visualize these areas as a pattern of circles which relate to each other.
REACTIONS TO TRAUMATIC EVENTS

- Anxiety about the possible recurrence of the event or a similar event.
- Emotional distress caused by events or objects that remind you of the traumatic event.
- Confusion, difficulty in concentration, memory problems or an inability to estimate time accurately.
- Flashbacks of the event that may be visual or may take the form of reliving the event emotionally.
- Temporary mood swings, general changes in temperament, irritability.
- Sleep problems and/or nightmares.
- Feeling depressed, detached or estranged from others.
- A change in appetite or eating patterns.
- Shortness of temper, angry feelings, or a lack of patience with yourself or others.
- Diminished interest in significant activities (work, social, or family).
- Questioning belief and value systems.
- Questioning your safety and security.

After a traumatic event, the wish to deny that it happened is as strong as the will to talk about it. The following will speed recovery:

- maintaining good diet, sleep and exercise habits;
- talking about the incident with people whom you trust;
- balancing self-isolation with the companionship of others;
- protecting yourself from further excessive stress;
- accepting fear in yourself;
- avoiding excessive rage and guilt;
- developing active task-oriented coping strategies; and
- accessing available resources and agencies.
Self-Care

THINGS TO TRY:

FOR SELF

- WITHIN THE FIRST 24 – 48 HOURS periods of appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Scheduling time to grieve, think, cry – not totally avoiding your emotional response.
- You’re human and have permission to express normal reactions to loss like everyone else.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol, you don’t need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out to support people – if no one is available, try contacting a crisis line or other community resource (ie: church/service club).
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal, write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Realize those around you are under stress.
- Don’t make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible which will give you a feeling of control over your life, ie: if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them even if you’re not sure.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don’t try to fight them – they’ll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don’t feel like it).
- Formal counselling (ie: Mental Health services, STF, Manulife)

FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

- Active listening, eye contact, feedback, ask appropriate questions.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Offer to be a safe source of support.
- Help them with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, minding children.
- Give them some private time.
- Don’t take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don’t tell them that they are “lucky it wasn’t worse” – traumatized people are not consoled by those statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to support and assist them.
Emergency Measures/Tragic Events Response Checklist

(To be completed by principal or designate)

This checklist is designed to provide a structured framework for responding to an emergency, crisis or tragic event within the school community.

1. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION (Within 24 hours of the traumatic event if possible)
   - Verify facts with the family or appropriate agency (usually the RCMP).
   - Notify the Superintendent of School Services or the Superintendent of Student Services
     - The Superintendent of School Services is in charge of all media inquiries.
     - A Superintendent will notify the Director of Education.
   - Obtain permission from the appropriate agency on what information can be shared.
   - Notify the other administrators whose schools may be impacted by this event.
   - Arrange for substitute teacher(s) if deemed necessary.

2. SCHOOL/DIVISION RESPONSE TEAM
   - When Emergency Measures need to be implemented, meet with the School Response Team and determine the support required.
   - When Tragic Events happen – contact the Coordinator of Integrated School Services – who will consult with you regarding the type of extra support required from the Division-Based Support team. The Coordinator of Integrated School Services will organize the required support personnel from the Division-Based Support Team.
   - Do not engage in conversations with the media – refer all inquiries to the Superintendent of Operations
   - Notify ALL staff (including those absent, on leave, etc.) of the tragedy and call a staff meeting.
   - In consultation with the Coordinator of ISS prepare a written statement of the traumatic event.
   - Identify high-risk individuals in the student and staff population and make the Division-Based Support Team aware so appropriate support can be provided.

3. INITIAL STAFF MEETING
   - Introduce and explain roles of the School Response Team and Division-Based Support Team.
   - Discuss with staff what information can be shared with students – if possible, a written statement about the traumatic event is very beneficial for consistency purposes.
   - Inform staff of the communication method the school will use for sharing information with parents (letter, telephone call, Facebook page, assembly, etc.)
   - Provide a suitable environment and opportunities for staff to sort out and validate their emotions by allowing time for expression and orientation around the situation.
   - Announce that there will be another staff meeting at the end of the school day.
   - Designate the first period of the day (or the first appropriate period) for discussion and debriefing with students.
   - Promote an atmosphere to ensure strategies and activities are utilized by teachers to enable students to express their feelings and to respond to the event. This information and guidance will be provided by your Counselling Consultant.
   - Cancel school events if deemed necessary.

4. END OF THE SCHOOL DAY STAFF MEETING
   - Review the events of the day and encourage feedback from staff
   - Provide an update on the tragic event/death and in the case of death – funeral arrangements
   - Identify students who may need particular monitoring to the Division-Based Support Team.
   - Arrange for notification of parents/guardians of students identified as “at-risk” with the assistance of the Division-Based Support Team.
   - Discuss plans for subsequent days including the role of the support team(s), debriefing opportunities, designated rooms for counselling, etc.
   - Decide on what formal or informal commemoration is appropriate at the school
GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO A SUICIDE ATTEMPT OR THREAT

The purpose of this guideline is to outline specific procedures as to "who" is to do "what", "where", and "when", if there is any risk of suicide.

Priority is:

(1) **Safety** of the student,
(2) **Communication** with those in a position to help
(3) **Referral, treatment and follow-up**

Each fall - at initial staff meetings, administrators must share information with staff regarding potential warning signs for suicide and review division guidelines for responding (see page 58-63 in the Emergency Measures/Traumatic Events Response – Procedural Guidelines).

Suicide Threat

- Regardless of the degree of risk perceived to be involved, the staff member in receipt of the information or who has developed uneasy feelings regarding a student must share that information with his/her school administrator immediately.
- The school administrator, after consulting with the Counselling Consultant, will notify the parents/guardians.
- The Counselling Consultant or other school personnel trained in **ASIST** can conduct an initial risk assessment.
- If there is reason to believe that the means to commit suicide has been brought to school, it may be considered grounds for search of the student or a search of the student's locker.
- The student should not leave the school unless accompanied by a parent/guardian, or a person clearly designated by the parent/guardian.
- After an initial risk-assessment, it may be deemed necessary that a parent/guardian or designated school personnel transport the student to the hospital for further assessment and/or possible admission. Under extreme circumstances it may be appropriate to call the RCMP.
- Designated school personnel should follow-up the next day with the parent/guardians to determine what action has been taken, and to identify the role of the school.
- All action taken should be chronologically documented and stored in the principal's files.
- The Coordinator of Integrated School Services should be contacted if additional support or interventions are required.

Suicide Attempts

- The person who discovers the situation should immediately dial 911 and follow the instructions given until appropriate help arrives.
- The school administrator will be notified as soon as possible.
- The school administrator will contact the student's parents/guardians.
- A staff member should accompany the student to the hospital and remain with the student until a parent or guardian arrives.
- The school administrator will contact their Superintendent of Learning and/or Coordinator of Integrated School Services to jointly decide the need to activate the Tragic Events Response Plan.

**NOTE:**

At no time is a student at risk to be left alone.

All information should be considered confidential and is to be shared only on a need-to-know basis.
School Guidelines for dealing with suicide threats or attempts at school

Teachers/Educational Assistants/Other School Personnel

*become aware of information regarding a student*

**Suicide attempts**

require immediate action

**CALL 911**

As soon as possible staff will notify *Administrator*

Administrator will **Contact Parents**

Superintendents contacted

Director informed

**Coordinator of Integrated School Services** will be consulted to decide the need to activate *Tragic Events Response Plan*

**Counselling Consultant and/or Outreach Worker** will be contacted for student support and follow up with parents/outside agencies

**Parent**

**Outside Agency**

**Suicidal ideation or threats**

must be reported immediately to *School Administrator*

*Administrator* will consult with

**Counselling Consultant and/or Outreach Worker** trained in ASIST will conduct initial risk-assessment

Based upon information from parents and initial risk-assessment student may be connected with an *Outside Agency* and/or transported to *Hospital* for further assessment and follow up

Administrator will **Contact Parents**
SAMPLE LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

There is no easy way to compose a letter of condolence. However, there are some tips-guidelines to keep in mind:

Write a personal note (1)

Sympathy cards express your concern, but there is no substitute for your personal written words. What do you say? Share a favorite memory of the person who died. Relate the special qualities that you valued in him or her. These words will often be a loving gift to the grieving family, words that will be reread and remembered for years.

Use the name of the person who has died either in your personal note or when you talk to the family. Hearing that name can be comforting, and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important person who was an important member of their family.

Keep it brief (2)

- Avoid euphemisms
- Enclose a picture or keepsake if you have one
- Respect the uniqueness of this loss
- Avoid sharing accounts of your own losses
- Don't preach or offer spiritual advice
- Don't try to turn the death into something positive with statements
- Be specific if you wish to offer help
- Know that it's better to be late in writing a condolence letter than to never send one

Step by Step Guide ... visit the web site for detailed sample (3)

- Name the deceased and acknowledge the loss.
- Offer your sympathy or condolences.
- Tell a Story or Share a Memory.
- End with a thoughtful expression or closure.

(1) Dr. Alan Wolfelt. "Write a personal note."
* The word friend was changed to family for the context of this resource

(2) Marty Tousley, CNS-BC, FT, DCC. “How to Write a Condolence Letter.”
http://www.griefhealing.com/articles-by-marty-tousley.htm

(3) Kirsti A. Dyer MD, MS, FT. “Writing a Condolence Card or Sympathy Note.”
http://suite101.com/article/how-to-write-a-sympathy-note-or-condolence-card-a226697
SAMPLE COMMUNICATION when speaking with staff

TO: Staff
FROM: Principal
DATE:

We are asking you to discuss the death of _____, a grade ______ student, with your class at the beginning of school. Some students will already be aware of his/her death from the news or communication among students through social media (ie. Facebook, twitter, texting, etc). Others will be learning of his/her death. It is recommended that you give your class an opportunity to hear the following facts from you, to ask questions, and to discuss their feelings. You can expect some students to be angry and upset as well as sad. Please be sensitive to their feelings.

_______died last night at _____p.m. after ________________.

Students may be excused from classes for _______’s funeral if they have permission from a parent. Funeral arrangements are still pending. We will give you that information when we receive it. The family will be at the funeral home tomorrow evening if anyone wishes to pay their respects and extend their sympathy. Some students may wish to make a donation to __________ in __________’s memory. A box is placed in the office for the collection of donations or any notes written to __________’s family.

The School Support Team will be in the school building throughout today and ________________.

If you wish some assistance in discussing ____________’s death with your class, a team member will come to your classroom. Counsellors will be available in Rooms ________. Please permit students to use the support rooms when they request to do so.

Today may be a very difficult one for you as well as our students. A support group member will be in the teacher’s staff room if you wish to talk further about the death.
GUIDELINES OF WRITTEN NOTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS

Written notification is helpful to staff but not necessary. The important part is that teachers are aware of what to tell their students.

The following sample statement may be used in the notification of students:

1. After a suicide...

"A tragedy has happened________ a _____ grade student committed suicide. Details of _______'s premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of his/her family. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible."

"This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings within the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed. In fact, you may think about hurting yourself too."

"Support rooms where you can come to talk about these feelings are available to you. Support rooms will be located in Rooms _________ for the next ____days. You can use the support rooms whenever you like. Let your classroom teacher know when you are doing so."

"As a school community, we need to come together and support each other."

2. After a fatality/homicide...

"A tragedy has happened. - Name - grade - # - student was killed in a fatality/homicide (died in the hospital). You will be given information about the funeral arrangements later."

"This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings within the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed."

"Support rooms where you can come to talk about these feelings are available to you. Support rooms will be located in Rooms _____ for the next _______days. You can use the support rooms whenever you like. The counsellors in the support rooms want to help you. Let your classroom teacher know when you are doing so."
SAMPLE LETTER TO ALL PARENTS

The school administrator, in consultation with the School/Division Response Team will decide if a letter to parents of other students enrolled in the school is appropriate. The letter may be directed to all parents, parents of students at the deceased's grade level or parents of classmates. In the event of a serious fatality involving students a similar letter with modifications would be appropriate.

A letter home should be brief and should include:

- How the school community is handling the expression of sympathy to the parents and/or family of the deceased;
- Explanation of the facts surrounding the death, funeral arrangements, and how the school will be handling attendance at the funeral. School personnel may wish to ask students planning to attend the funeral during school hours to bring written permission from their parents/guardians authorizing attendance at the funeral;
- Some details on the deceased person’s background; and concluding comments which focus on support for the family.

Suggested Model of Letter to Parents Informing Them of the Death of Student/Staff Member

NOTE: Letter could include handouts on how children respond to grief.

(To be placed on school letterhead)

(Date)

Dear Parent(s):

On - _______ date ______- one of our students died suddenly and unexpectedly. In addition to our grief over the loss of this member of our school community, we are sensitive to the fact that such an event has an impact on other students.

In response, the school has implemented a plan which allows students an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and feelings with trained professional staff. We expect that some will seek out this help, while others may not. Those who do will be provided an opportunity to express their feelings and grief. This is not intended to take the place of other professional counselling.

Anticipating that your son/daughter may have a reaction to this event, we have enclosed in this mailing some information* which should be helpful to you as you respond to your son/daughter’s concerns? If you should determine that your son/daughter needs further professional counselling, please feel free to contact the school for phone numbers of local agencies that are available to assist you.

If it seems advisable, we will offer all concerned parents an opportunity to meet with professionals to discuss this recent crisis.
Sample School Response Team Membership List and Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Response Team Members</th>
<th>Home Phone #</th>
<th>Cell Phone #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division Support (ie: Counselling Consultant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Agency (if deemed appropriate)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Staff Assignment List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>PERSON(S)</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiate School Emergency Plan</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather and Confirm Details</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for Injuries or Trauma</td>
<td>Those with training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Appropriate Agencies</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Director/Superintendent</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather records</td>
<td>Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Building</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm Attendance</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check Washrooms</td>
<td>Administrator/Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare Students</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Evacuation (First Aid Kit)</td>
<td>Administrator/Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign Volunteers</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Receiving Facility</td>
<td>Admin Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle Phone Calls</td>
<td>Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle Media</td>
<td>Director/Superintendent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet Incoming Agencies</td>
<td>Division office support team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Response Team</td>
<td>(List members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergency First Aid Kit

Will be located in the Admin Assistant’s Office and will contain:

Information:

1. list of students, including parent/guardian phone list and emergency contact, to be updated (ie: 1st Monday of each month)
   - medical information of special medical needs for students/staff
   - copy of Emergency Measures plan
   - floor plan of the school
   - plan will indicate where all hazardous materials are stored
   - plan will indicate emergency routes for all classrooms Office Supplies
   - cell phone
   - minimum 3 clipboards
   - office supplies: pens, pencils (sharpened) paper, string, tape, stapler

First Aid Supplies

a. 500 paper cups (swish)
b. matches (waterproof)
c. 16 candles & holders
d. flashlight & batteries
e. special blankets (4)
f. diabetic pack
g. 6 rolls toilet paper
h. 10 tea towels
i. 50 Band-Aids
j. rubber gloves
k. gauze safety pins
l. scissors
m. triangular bandage
n. pads
o. cold packs
p. large ziplock bags
q. 20 large garbage bags

First Aid Personnel – Trained Staff Members: keep a list