

## Suicide Loss: Checklist of Crisis Team Tasks to Complete

*More detailed information is presented in your text. We created a simple list here for expediency in checklist format to ensure you've completed all necessary steps.*

### **BEFORE an incident ever occurs**

*Many of the items below will be completed by the entire crisis team with administration*

<b>√ when complete</b>	<b><u>Task</u></b>
	Develop a staff phone tree.
	Identify the members of your crisis team.
	Identify roles of each crisis team member; who is the team leader?
	Ensure you have a comprehensive crisis plan that includes protocols for response to a potentially suicidal youth as well as response after a suicide loss.
	Ensure your procedures include how to handle a student who has attempted suicide, was hospitalized and/or is now transitioning back into school.
	Is your mental health staff trained to handle a potentially suicidal youngster?
	Are your teachers trained to identify warning signs of a student at risk?
	Are your teachers trained in what to do if a student presents suicidal concerns?
	Are students provided knowledge and awareness of suicide warning signs?
	Do students know where to get help if they are feeling depressed or suicidal?
	Are students aware of what to do if they are concerned about a peer?
	Develop MOU's with outside MH agencies as well as local police.
	Prepare a list of home/cell numbers of outside support personnel.
	Plan space for meetings and safe rooms.
	Prepare Go-Kits.
	Develop a policy on memorials.
	Establish a protocol for student attendance at funerals.
	Establish a protocol for staff attendance at funerals.
	Implement social media networks for positive announcements.
	Designate local media designee/spokesperson.
	Establish a relationship with your local media focusing on positive events.

## **AFTER a suicide: The first 24 hours**

*It is suggested that you also review "After a suicide: A toolkit for schools" created by AFSP & SPRC (2011) as this document is formatted in a manner that it makes suggestions for tasks to be accomplished by each crisis team member fulfilling certain roles. That document may work better for your particular crisis team. We, however, find that roles are much more fluid, so find it more impactful to identify varied persons responsible for individual tasks here. Also, see "Preventing suicide: A toolkit for high schools" by SAMHSA (2012) for further guidelines as well as sample scripts in making phone calls and in announcing a suicide death. This document also has a checklist, though we created ours to include significant detail to ensure you do not miss steps.*

<b>✓ when complete</b>	<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Person Responsible</u></b>
<b><u>Administrative Tasks</u></b>		
	Notify key personnel of the suicide death, including superintendent.	
	If the suicide death (or attempt) occurs on campus, call 911 immediately then notify the school nurse.	
	If suicide occurs on campus, institute lockdown procedures, isolate the area, do not allow staff or students exposure to the body, and treat it as a crime scene (touch nothing).	
	If suicide occurs on campus, anyone who viewed the body should be provided counseling support. This may include the nurse, whoever found the body, administrators, and facilities staff.	
	If suicide occurs on campus, contact an OUTSIDE agency for cleanup. Do not allow school maintenance/custodians to clean.	
	Mobilize the crisis team, set a meeting time, and begin planning steps and assigning responsibility as per your school crisis plan.	
	If the suicide does not occur on campus, verify the death, either with the family or first responders and share information back to crisis team and counselors.	
	Call the family to confirm cause of death and seek permission for sharing this information, offer condolences, and remain in continued contact with the family for funeral arrangements, etc.	
	Visit the family in person to offer support if possible.	
	Contact mental health staff to make aware of pending situation.	
	Notify a communications director or public relations staff.	
	Designate a media spokesperson to handle all media inquiries and write a press release, if appropriate. Work with the press utilizing established reporting guidelines for suicide.	
	Once death is verified, remove student's name from all computer and mailing lists to ensure families do not receive notices.	

	Inform transportation officials to alert bus driver and offer support.	
	Identify school-age siblings within the district and contact their schools.	
	Arrange to have someone meet with every class in which the student was enrolled.	
	If teachers will be notifying their students about the loss, create a script for them to read with accurate information.	
	Write a script to provide secretaries or those who may answer the phone as a suicide loss can be difficult on them as well.	
	Prepare a statement or letter to go home and be put on webpage (see sample in handout).	
	Decide if any extracurricular events or athletic events need to be postponed or cancelled.	
	Designate specific rooms in which to set up a counseling center to provide safe rooms.	
	Ensure go-kits and other needed supplies are in safe room area.	
	Print several copies of the safe room sign-in sheet (see handout).	
	Identify trained mental health staff to man the safe rooms.	
	Teachers of the deceased student MUST be told with compassion and care; designate someone with whom they have rapport. Arrange for assistance in the classroom if teacher requests it.	
	Have resources available for staff, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).	
	Consider cultural differences of students to plan effective response.	
	Determine level of response needed (minimal, building level, district level or regional level).	
	Coordinate external resources/additional help if needed or have them on backup.	
	Proactively use and monitor various social media sites.	
	Do substitute teachers need to be arranged for any teachers who are grieving or want to attend a funeral?	
	Other:	
<b>Notifications</b>		
	Notify teachers and staff either via engaging the phone chain if outside of school hours or in-person during school hours.	
	Conduct a staff meeting before school if possible or after school if notified during the school day.	

	Provide teachers with information on suicide grief (see handout).	
	Notify teachers of the location and how to make referrals to safe rooms.	
	Provide teachers with tips in talking to students (see handout).	
	Ensure all teachers and staff know who to refer to if they receive a media inquiry.	
	Notify students of the death – Do this quickly as they are already likely discovering information via social media. Do this personally in the classroom and not over the PA system.	
	Provide students with information on healing and where to get help if needed.	
	Notify parents of the letter coming home and on the webpage.	
	Provide parents with information on suicide grief (see handout).	
	Notify any stakeholders, community members, agencies or neighboring schools that may also be impacted by this loss.	
	Other:	
<b>Student &amp; Staff Care</b>		
	Prioritize students needing immediate support (consider geographical proximity, psychosocial proximity, and populations at risk).	
	Continue to triage throughout the day to continue to identify students and staff who are especially impacted by the loss. Identify someone to keep a list of concerns for follow up.	
	Provide referrals for students who need more in-depth care.	
	Coordinate parent/community meetings; schedule a time and a designated space.	
	Provide staff with self-care information (see handout).	
	Debrief at the end of the first day with all school staff; share information, thank everyone and offer collegial support.	
	The crisis team and mental health staff must debrief with each other after the staff meeting; yes, you must stay!	
	Continue to monitor if additional supports are needed to manage safe rooms. Plan for the following day.	
	Other:	

## Beyond 24 hours: The following days and weeks

✓ when complete	<u>Task</u>	<u>Person Responsible</u>
	Implement and stick to memorial policy already created.	
	Remove spontaneous memorials as quickly as is possible.	
	Decide which administrative personnel will attend funeral.	
	Follow up with concerning students and staff in the following week as well as after the funeral.	
	Identify staff or students to clean out the student's desk/locker.	
	Inform staff and students of funeral arrangements as available.	
	Plan longer term supports such as grief groups, if appropriate.	
	Plan for important events such as anniversaries of the death, graduation dates, birthdays, etc.	
	Continue to offer messages of hope – Post administrative updates on the website or other social media outlet.	
	Evaluate this checklist after the crisis event has settled, but within 3 days to add items learned.	
	Update crisis plan as needed.	
	Other:	