



### **Key Roles on the Crisis Response Team**

- a. Crisis Response Team Coordinator:** This person presides over all the crisis team meetings and manages the specific functioning of the team.
- b. Family Liaison:** This person serves as the contact person for the family of the deceased. Necessary skills include empathy, good communication, and knowledge in the grief process. Responsibilities include offering support and information to and obtaining needed information from the family.
- c. Media Liaison:** The Superintendent serves as the only contact person for the media. Responsibilities include communicating with media that contacts the school, and explaining rules for press verbally and in writing.
- d. Communications Coordinator:** This person carries out all in-house communication. Responsibilities include screening and logging of all incoming calls related to the crisis and assisting in maintaining an up-to-date directory of district staff and community resources.
- e. Staff Notification and Support:** This person serves as the contact person for staff. Responsibilities include informing staff of the crisis, providing ongoing updates to staff, and serving as a source of support for staff members affected by the crisis.
- f. Student Notification and Support:** This person informs students of the crisis. Responsibilities include obtaining facts to help dispel rumors and informing students of support systems in place for their use.
- g. Safe Room Coordinator:** This person is in charge of setting up the “safe room”. Responsibilities include identifying an appropriate location, gathering appropriate supplies, and contacting safe room facilitators (including outside mental health agencies).



### **Guidelines / Tips for Faculty and Staff on Talking to Students After a Death**

- 1.** Try to dispel rumors. If you overhear students talking about specifics regarding the death, try to re-direct and remind students that this is a difficult time for everyone. Talking about the manner in which someone died can be painful for others to overhear. Try using “Let’s focus on how we are feeling about his/her death and what we can do to heal” or encourage them to use available counseling.
- 2.** Allow students to express emotions. It is natural for students to become tearful, if this persists to reassure the student it is ok to be sad and guide them to talk with counselors on staff. Let students know it is natural to experience “grief bursts” after a loss.
- 3.** Listen to what the student has to say. It’s important to allow students to express their thoughts, feelings and reactions.
- 4.** Remind students that everyone grieves differently. Some students find talking about their relationship with the deceased helpful while others don’t like to grieve in a group setting. There is no right way to grieve.
- 5.** If the student died from an illness and it is appropriate to do so, discuss the illness. Especially with younger children, they need reassurance that the stomach ache or cold they had last week does not mean they too will pass away.
- 6.** Allow students to discuss other losses they have faced. It is important for them to understand that this loss might bring up feelings from a past loss they have experienced and this is normal.
- 7.** Encourage students to discuss their feelings and reactions with their parents/guardians/family. If they are not able to do so, encourage them to talk with the Guidance Counselor/Dean of Student Services who can counsel or refer to an outside agency for long-term counseling.
- 8.** Be honest, especially with younger children. Try to avoid phrases like “he/she is in a better place” or “he/she is resting”, this is likely to confuse the child. Instead, try “(Name of Student) has died and we will all miss our friend very much”.
- 9.** If a suicide occurs, discuss general facts and myths as appropriate. (See Talking about Suicide)

**Talking about Suicide**

**Give Accurate Information About Suicide**

Suicide is a complicated behavior. It is not caused by a single event such as a bad grade, an argument with parents/friends, or the breakup of a relationship.

In most cases, suicide is caused by an underlying mental disorder like depression or substance abuse. Mental disorders affect the way people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly and rationally. Having a mental disorder is nothing to be ashamed of and help is available.

Talking about suicide in a calm, straightforward manner does not put ideas into kids' minds.

**By Saying...**

"The cause of \_\_\_'s death was a suicide. Suicide is most often caused by serious mental disorders like depression, combined with other complications"

"There is help available to people having suicidal thoughts"

"Mental Disorders are not something to be ashamed of and there are very good therapies and treatments to help with depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, etc"

"We have a lot of very good counseling services that we can connect you with if you need someone to talk to"

**Address Blaming and Scapegoating**

It is common to try to answer the question "why?" after a suicide death. Sometimes this can turn into blaming others for the death.

**By Saying...**

"The reasons that someone dies by suicide are not simple, and are related to mental health disorders that get in the way of the person thinking clearly. Blaming others—or blaming the person who died—does not acknowledge the reality that the person was battling mental health issues"

**Do Not Focus on the Method or Graphic Details**

Talking in graphic detail about the method can create images that are upsetting and can increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable youth.

If asked, do not lie about the cause of death. It's ok to say they died by suicide but avoid details. The focus should not be on how someone killed themselves but rather on how to cope with feelings of sadness, loss, anger, etc.

**By Saying...**

"It is tragic that he/she died by suicide. Let's talk about how \_\_\_'s death has affected you and ways for you to manage your feelings"

"How can we figure out the best ways to deal with your loss and grief?"



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Address Anger</b></p> <p>Accept expressions of anger at the deceased and explain that these feelings are normal.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>By Saying...</b></p> <p>“It is ok to feel angry. These feelings are normal and it doesn’t mean that you didn’t care about _____. You can be angry at someone’s actions and still care deeply about that person.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Address Feelings of Responsibility</b></p> <p>Reassure those who feel responsible or think they could have done something to save the deceased.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>By Saying...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “His/her death is not your fault.”</li><li>● “We can’t always predict someone else’s behavior.”</li><li>● “We can’t always control someone else’s behavior.”</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Encourage Help-Seeking</b></p> <p>Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult if they or a friend are feeling depressed or suicidal.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>By Saying...</b></p> <p>“We are always here to help you through any problem, no matter what. Who are the people you would go to if you or a friend were feeling worried or depressed?”</p> <p>“There are effective therapies and treatments to help people who have depression, anxiety, or are engaging in self-injurious behaviors. We can always help you connect with a counselor to help you.”</p> <p>“This is an important time for us to support one another. If you are concerned about your feelings or if you are concerned about a friend, tell a trusted adult.”</p>

*(Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Resource Center. 2011. After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.)*



### Crisis Directory

#### a. Crisis Response Team Coordinator:

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#### c. Media Liaison:

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**g. Safe Room Coordinator:**

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• **Elementary ( 5th - 6th grade)**

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