Plan for Prevention and Intervention in Emotional and Behavioral Crisis and Postvention After a Student Death or Other Crisis

Bellingham Public Schools

Last updated (2/28/2018)

Bellingham Public Schools - Prevention/Intervention Specialist

Location	Position	Name	Office
Bellingham	Prevention/ Intervention	Jeff McKenna	676-6575 ext. #7131
Squalicum	Prevention/ Intervention	Kathleen Peterson	676-6471 ext. #7730
Sehome	Prevention/ Intervention	Meghan Lever	676-6481 ext. #6481

To respond to a crisis, administrators can seek support from the following:

PREVENTION

Bellingham Public Schools recognizes that prevention of youth suicide, violence and substance abuse and the early identification and treatment of mental health disorders are most effective when students, staff, parents, and community members have access to prevention information and resources. With this in mind, the following will occur:

Bellingham Public Schools Staff

Annual mandatory training in suicide awareness will be provided for all staff (teachers, classified, bus drivers, food service, etc.).

Annual mandatory training in harassment, intimidation and bullying will be provided for all staff.

A training will be provided for counselors and nurses including the following information:

- Background and scope of emotional and behavioral issues affecting students and their impact on the school environment, including review of school and district Healthy Youth Survey data;
- Information about the signs of stress, depression and other mental health issues;
- Information on risk factors and warning signs for youth violence;
- Information about youth substance abuse, how to identify signs of substance abuse, and where to send students for help;
- Information on risk factors for suicide and signs of suicidal thinking;
- Information about steps to intervene when a student presents signs of suicidal thinking;
- Information about the district's policies and procedures for responding to emotional and behavioral distress among students; and
- Identification of school safety and support team members and their roles in a crisis.

We will continue to emphasize the portion of the Bellingham Promise that states that "every child will be loved." We will also continue to emphasize

We will continue and grow the MAD HOPE peer suicide awareness and prevention training. This year we trained over 400 people in peer suicide prevention training. We believe that peers are often the first to notice suicidal tendencies.

The district will continue to emphasize listening to and caring for our LGBTQA students.

Parent and staff training opportunities for depression and anxiety will be offered.

An annual review of this plan and plan revisions will occur in the fall of the school year, during the time that other safety information is reviewed. The review will be done by the following person(s):

Location	Position	Name	Office	Email
Central Services	Student Services	Steve Morse	360/676-2787	Steve.morse@bellinghamschools.o

The following tasks should be completed as part of the review and revision process:

- Update contact and community resource lists to confirm accuracy.
- Update any Memoranda of Understanding between the district and local agencies
- Update in-school and in-district resources to ensure that names, roles, and contact information are current.
- Update contact information in all print and electronic copies of this plan.
- Update contact information in all communications and educational materials, including the school's website, student handbooks, resource guides, parent education materials, procedure manuals, student ID cards, and other forms and publications.

Access to online and written copies of this plan will be on Bellingham Public Schools' Intranet site under Student Services for staff to access.

Bellingham Public Schools’ Students’ Families

In partnership with each school’s parent and family organization, an annual training will be offered including the following:

- Background and scope of emotional and behavioral issues affecting children and youth of the appropriate age and their impact on the family, including school and district Healthy Youth Survey data;
- Information about the signs of stress, depression and other common mental health issues and the family’s role in helping;
- Information about youth substance abuse and how to identify signs of substance abuse;
- Information on risk factors and warning signs for youth violence and the family’s role in prevention and intervention;
- Information on risk factors for suicide and signs of suicidal thinking and the family’s role in prevention and intervention; and,
- Resources in the school and community for families and how to access them.

Written information about prevention of and family intervention in emotional and behavioral crises will be offered to schools to publish in their newsletters or distribute at parent events and in intervention meetings.

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Student leadership on prevention of violence, bullying, suicide and substance abuse will be carried out by the following clubs and student organizations:

Club or Organization	Faculty Advisor	Phone	Email
MAD HOPE Suicide Prevention	Jeff McKenna	676-6575 ext. #7131	Jeff.mckenna@bellinghamschools.org
LGBTQA Clubs	Bethany Barrett	676-6470 ext. #7649	Bethany.Barrett@bellinghamschools.org
LGBTQA Clubs	Jeff Smith	676-6481 ext. #5324	Jeffrey.Smith@bellinghamschools.org

Prevention and/or

INTERVENTION

The following process should be followed when a staff member becomes aware that a student is experiencing a crisis that may involve risk of harm to self or others.

SUICIDE ASSESSMENT

Bellingham Public Schools Counselors

Student's Name:_____ Date:_____ Interviewer: _____

Reason for assessment:

_____
_____
_____
_____

1. Are you thinking about suicide? Yes No
2. Do you have a plan? Yes No
    a. If, YES, where/when/how? _____
    b. Do you have access to the necessary materials for the plan? Yes No
3.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Things that I can say to myself to make me feel better:

Things that I can do to make me feel better:

I can call these adults who care about me to talk with them when I feel overwhelmed:

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	NUMBER

Hotlines that I can call- I will put these numbers in my phone right now so I have them if I need them:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK
(1-800-273-8255)
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

National Hopeline Network
1-800-SUICIDE
(1-800-784-2433)
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a weno426 14.42 0 Td ( )Tj

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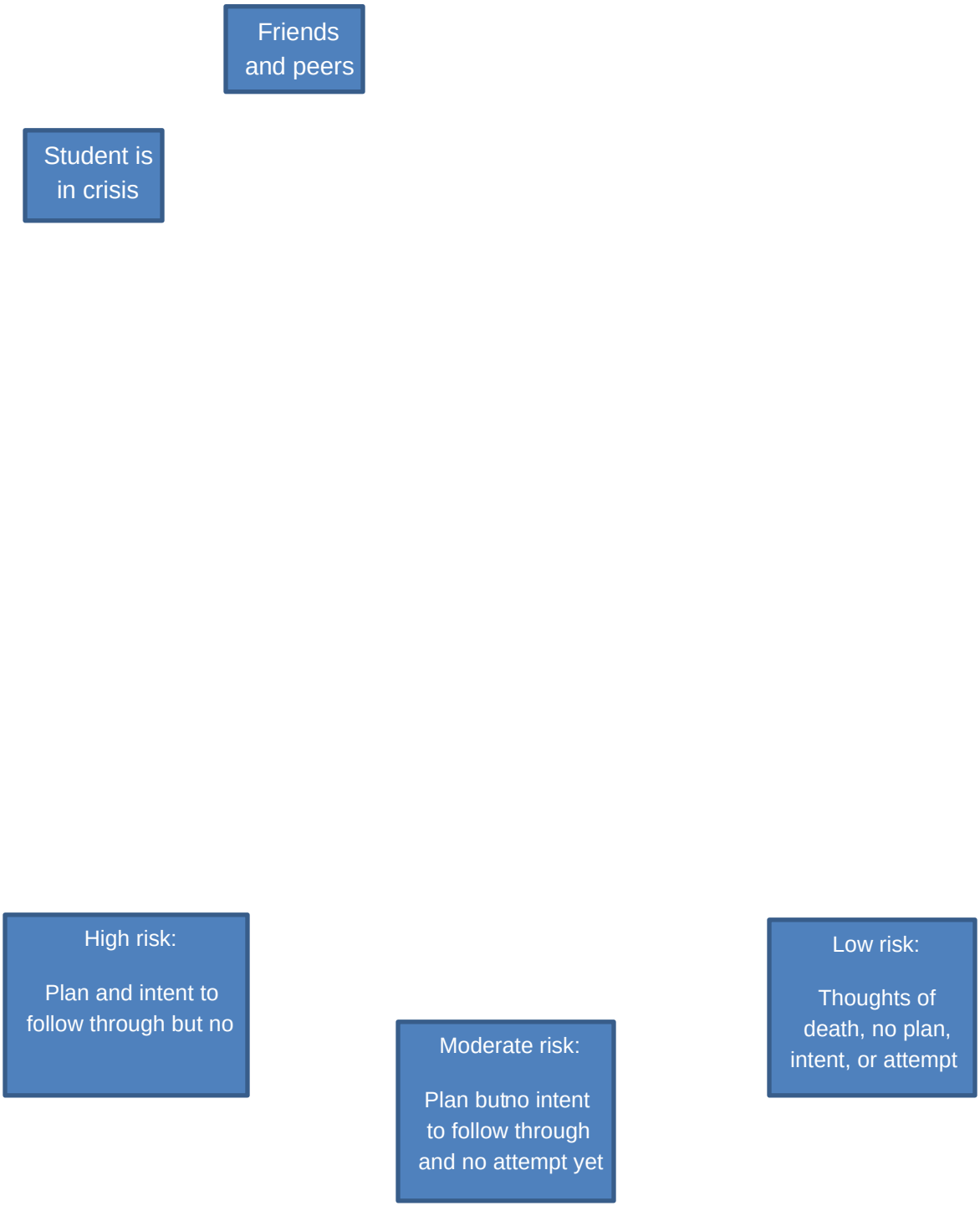
Procedures will differ based on the level of risk revealed by this risk assessment. All actions taken need to be documented and documentation placed in the student's file.



IMMINENT RISK

- There is immediate danger to the student's self or others (for example, possession of a weapon or other means the student intends to use to harm self or others)
- There is a suicide attempt in progress (for example, the student has taken a medication overdose)

The support team member or other staff will do the following:

- Provide for continuous supervision of the student at risk until an emergency responder arrives, keeping personal safety in mind.
- Call 911 or designate a person to call. Be mindful that in the presence of a weapon or danger to others, emergency medical personnel will need the scene secured by law enforcement personnel before they can intervene.
- Notify the building administrator or their proxy.

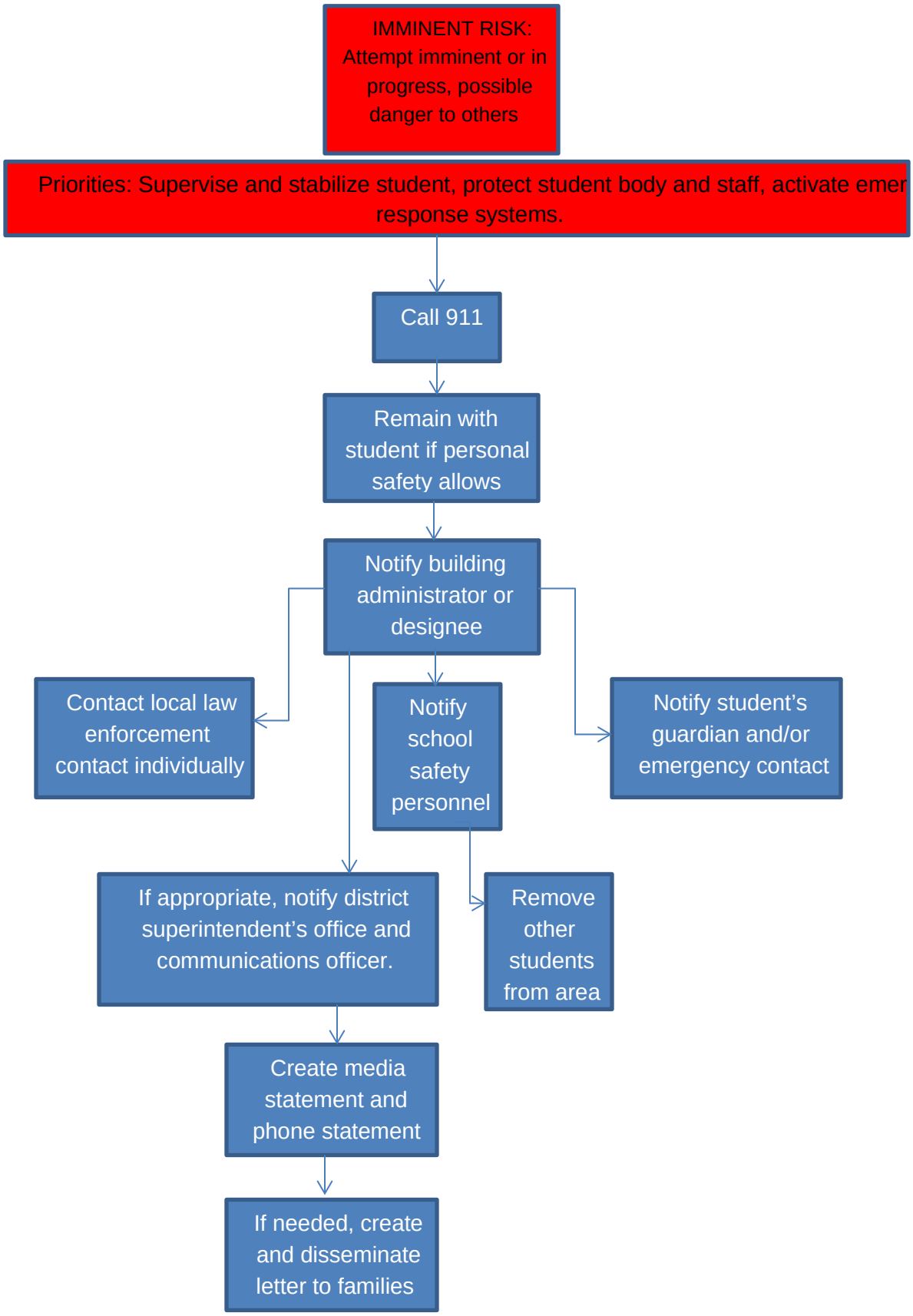
Depending on the situation, the support team member, building administrator or proxy will:

- Notify the person(s) responsible for security within the building to ensure safety of the student at risk and the staff and student body. Even with no danger to others, if a suicide attempt is imminent or in progress, other students need to be removed quickly and calmly from the vicinity.
- Notify the student's guardian and/or emergency contact by telephone and document the time and content of the conversation.
- Fill out the district's incident report forms.
- Notify the district superintendent and the communications office of the situation.

If necessary, the Department of Communications and Community Relations media contact will:

- Draft a statement to be given to any media who approach or call the school;
- Draft talking points for office staff answering calls from families at the school and the district;
- Create or help the administrator create a statement for students' families, summarizing:
  - Factual information about what occurred, steering clear of details
  - What the school did to ensure safety and what will happen next
  - Reactions families might expect from their children
  - Re-assurances that the school remains open and remains safe.
- If communication with families is necessary, the letter will be developed for families by the communications office within one school day of the incident.

CHART 1: IMMINENT RISK



HIGH RISK

- The student is in severe distress due to mental health symptoms or a serious stressor
- The student has identified a realistic suicide plan and intention to follow through on it but has not yet taken action

The support team member will do the following:

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CHART 2: HIGH RISK

MODERATE RISK

- The student is thinking about suicide and has identified a plan
- The student has no intention of following through on the plan and has made no suicidal gestures

The support team member will do the following:

- Remain with the student and provide support, safety and continuous supervision.
-

CHART 3: MODERATE RISK

RE-ENTRY

If a student has missed one or more days of school because of a crisis (for example, because of inpatient hospitalization or substance abuse treatment):

- Remain in touch with the family and the provider during the student's absence.
- If possible, get notification of the student's return to school one to two weeks ahead of time. Especially after a long absence or an absence after a dramatic crisis, students may be very fearful and hesitant about returning to school, and more planning and processing time can ease the stress of this difficult transition.
- If the student needs medical or psychiatric clearance to return to school or to participate in normal school activities (for example, physical education classes) upon return, obtain

with the student daily and remain in contact, if appropriate, with the student's guardian and care providers.

- A check-in meeting with the student and guardian should be scheduled about a week after return or as concerns arise to review accommodation and safety plan content and make necessary adjustments.

CHART 5: RE-ENTRY AFTER INPATIENT CARE FOR MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

PRIORITIES:

Help student who has been absent for some period of time for mental health care or subst

POSTVENTION

Bellingham Public Schools recognizes that the death of a student, whether by suicide or other means, is a crisis that affects the entire school and community. In the event of a student's death, it is critical that the school's response be swift, consistent and intended to protect the student body and community. In the case of a death by suicide, other concerns such as the prevention of suicide contagion will be taken into account.

CONFIRMING THE NEWS AND CONVENING THE CRISIS TEAM

Upon receiving news of a student death, including an unconfirmed rumor, a staff member must immediately contact the building administrator or designee. Contact must be made whether this is during or outside school hours.

The building administrator will confirm the veracity of the information. This could include communication with the deceased student's family.

- Consider the family's language, religion, culture and relationship with the school. Will you need the assistance of a translator or community leader? How will you ensure cultural competency and a compassionate, supportive stance?
- Discuss with the family how they want the death described to the school community. (For example, are they uncomfortable with it being referred to as a suicide? Is an ongoing investigation hampering communication?)

Upon confirming that the information is correct, the building administrator or designee will activate the school's phone tree or school messenger to notify all staff that there has been a student death and there will be a staff meeting of at least an hour before school the next morning.

The administrator or designee will activate Bellingham Public Schools' Mobile Response Team. To convene this group, administrators should contact the following person(s):

Organization	Contact Person	Phone Number	Cell Phone
Bellingham Public Schools	Steve Morse	360/676-6400 ext. #4456	360-961-8540

The administrator and Mobile Response Team contact will discuss:

- The team's feedback on how to handle the crisis.
- Who from the mobile response team will attend the morning staff meeting and what their roles will be.
- The Mobile Response Team's presence in the school and role in Safe Room coverage.
- The needs of other district schools, such as feeder schools and family members' schools.

The administrator will also contact the Department of Communications and Community Relations. All media inquiries will be directed to this department and students and staff will be directed not to speak with any representatives of the media.

The Department of Communications and Community Relations will:

- Prepare a statement for media and a bulleted list of talking points
- Prepare a short statement for office staff answering phones at the school and district
- Designate who is the media contact and share the above with that person and building administrators

The Mobile Response Team will also refer employees to the Employee Assistance Program

Program	Phone
Employee Assistance Program/Health Promotion NW	1-800-244-6142

Additionally, Communications will notify administrators at feeder schools and family members' schools. Depending on the situation, these administrators may need to:

- Convene a staff meeting tomorrow morning following the agenda listed in the next section, or alert staff about the planned staff meeting at the deceased student's school
- Discuss with the Mobile Response Team leader placing extra counseling staff at their school for the week.
- Discuss with the EAP the possibility of placing counselors for staff during the next week.
- Reach out to family members of the deceased student (the student's family of origin and/or relatives who attend the school) and offer support.
- Provide office staff with the same statement being read at the deceased student's school

CHART 6: UPON HEARING OF A STUDENT'S DEATH: BEFORE THE NEXT SCHOOL DAY

Priorities: Determine what actually happened, connect appropriately with the deceas student's family, communicate with all staff and involve key district resource people.

Plan to connect with student's family and reach out to appropriate support (i.e. translator).

Verify story and needs with family.

Activate phone tree with plans for staff meeting before school tomorrow.

Communicate with district media officer about facts.

Contact Mobile Response Team leader and discuss

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS ON THE FIRST DAY

- The deceased student's name will be immediately removed from the school's attendance roster, automated call system, and any other place that a call home could be initiated.
- A staff meeting (about an hour long) will be held and conclude before students arrive for the school day. ALL staff should attend, including instructional staff, health staff, available transportation staff, school security staff, food service workers, maintenance staff, and any contractors or outside workers present in the building during (for example, construction workers working on the building).

The staff meeting agenda will include the following:

- Verifiable facts about the death and information about the family's needs and preferences.
- Time for staff to ask questions and express feelings.
- Information about grief counseling and support available through the Employee Assistance Program and procedures for accessing it.
- Review of the school and district's postvention plans.
- Identification of Mobile Response Team members and introductions if they are not known to staff.
- Dissemination of statement to be read by teachers during the first period of the day.
- Location of the Safe Room and what will take place there.
- Discussion of students who immediately come to mind as at risk during this crisis.
- Discussion of roles:
  - Safe room staffing and counseling support until the end of the school day
    - At least two adults should be in the Safe Room at all times. At least one should be a person with advanced training in suicide prevention.
  - Which support team member will follow the deceased student's schedule for the day
    - This person's role will be to help facilitate discussions in the classroom and provide 1:1 support for any student in crisis.
  - Extra patrols of the halls and grounds.
  - Telephone coverage at the school and who will instruct student volunteers not to answer school phones today
  - District media contact; what staff and students should do if approached by media
- Discussion of procedures:
  - How to refer a student affected by the crisis to the Safe Room.

DURING THE SCHOOL DAY ON THE FIRST DAY

- Each homeroom teacher will read the same statement to their class. This statement should not be made in an assembly or over the school's public address system. The statement will summarize the facts of the situation, the school's response plan and the importance of seeking immediate help from an adult if a student or their peer is in crisis.

  For more information about tailoring a statement to the situation and what topics to avoid in this conversation see the Suicide Prevention Resource Center publication, After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools
- Communication will go to students' families. Communication with parents is dependent on the wishes of the deceased student's family and might include the following:
  - Brief factual information about the crisis, avoiding focus on details of the death or means.
  - The school's condolences to the deceased student's friends and family
  - Messages about grieving, such as that other students may feel regret, guilt, anxiety or fear.
  - Mention of existing support and suicide prevention resources in the school.
  - Discussion of the school's crisis response.
  - Discussion of suicide contagion, including signs of a crisis and intervention strategies.
  - Encouragement to contact the school if there is any indication their child needs extra support.
  - An invitation to be in touch with resources within the school with questions or concerns and contact information for a point person.

If a family meeting is scheduled close to the suicide, presenters' content will be the same as the above. The administrator should be mindful of the fact that people beyond the student's immediate families will be affected by the crisis and that community members should be included in the meeting.

- A continuing effort will be made during this school day to keep listing students who may be in need of extra support or at risk of suicide contagion. The following should be considered:
  - Students who are having an unusually strong reaction to the death.
  - The deceased student's friends.
  - The deceased student's dating partners.
  - Students related to the deceased student.
  - Teammates, members of the same clubs and other associates.
  - Other students with a history of suicidal thoughts or behaviors.
  - Other students who have dealt with a recent crisis or loss.
  - Students experiencing mental health problems or other vulnerabilities.
  - Where possible, parents may be encouraged to add their children to the list if they have concerns.
- Mobile response team members will reach out to each student on this list for a one-on-one meeting and needs assessment within one to t4 (r)3c-2 (o)-10 (a)4 (d)-10 (d t)-2 (heJ -0 -1b)4 (m)-2 (b)T