

# STOP Texas SUICIDES

## POSTVENTION FOR SCHOOLS

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



### SCHOOL POSTVENTION GOALS

- Support the grieving process safely
- Prevent imitative or contagion of suicidal activity
- Identify students at risk and refer to care
- Communicate safely
- Re-establish a healthy school and community climate
- Provide long-term surveillance
- Use evidence of effective strategies and protocols such as [“After a Suicide Toolkit for Schools”](#)

**If you or someone you know is at risk of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK**

### RESPONSE PROTOCOL—IMMEDIATE STEPS FOR SCHOOLS

Follow evidence of effectiveness protocols such as:

- Get the facts: determine if the death was a suicide, is undetermined, or if the family does not wish to disclose the cause of death.
- Contact family of the deceased student.
- Determine what and how information is to be shared
- Follow your school district’s suicide prevention and postvention plan.
- Mobilize the crisis response team and plan.
- Inform faculty and staff.
- Assess the impact on the school.
- Identify at-risk students and staff and refer to appropriate care.
- Take into account cultural diversity considerations.
- Follow guidelines for media and share reporting on suicide guidelines with media.
- Protect other youth from contagion by encouraging parents of the deceased student to remove their child’s social media pages after a period following the death.
- Seek out mental health professionals who might post the 1-800-273-8255 Suicide Prevention Lifeline link & local referral info on social network sites.
- When possible, identify youth opinion leaders to provide insights into the school social media climate.
- Identify what has been shared on social media and positive and safe messaging connecting to resources and care.

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

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

Texas Suicide Prevention Council

[TexasSuicidePrevention.org](http://TexasSuicidePrevention.org)

[admin@texassuicideprevention.org](mailto:admin@texassuicideprevention.org)

 [@StopTXSuicides](https://twitter.com/StopTXSuicides)  [bit.ly/2UHgzlc](https://bit.ly/2UHgzlc)

A program of NAMI Texas

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## POSTVENTION IN SCHOOLS—KEY POINTS FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

- Prevention strategies are critical – share warning signs and risk factors with community members.
- Stress that suicide is complicated – no one thing/person/event/organization is to blame.
- Emphasize the connection between mental health and suicide.
- Anger is a normal response – it’s OK to be angry.
- Share resources and communicate safely by using the [National Action Alliance Framework for Successful Messaging](#)
- Sample approaches are available at the Texas Suicide Prevention Council’s website:  
<https://texassuicideprevention.org/information-library/schools-and-youth-materials/>

## A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT SUICIDE CLUSTERS

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

Appropriate school postvention protocols can help prevent clusters and contagion.

## COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION

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

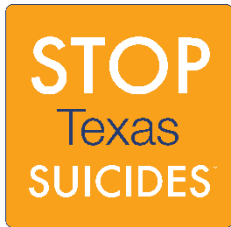
Texas Suicide Prevention Council

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## MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING A DEATH BY SUICIDE

- Do not conduct on-campus memorial services.
- Goal is to balance the students’ need to grieve while limiting risk.
- Monitor the student population for warning signs <https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org>.
- Follow the Framework for Success Messaging from the National Action Alliance: <http://suicidepreventionmessaging.org>
- Provide opportunities for small group/individual discussion with mental health professionals.
- Do not glorify or romanticize the act of suicide and monitor any activity around spontaneous memorials on campus
- Avoid mass assemblies that focus on the deceased student or large gatherings that are unsupervised
- Do not establish permanent memorials dedicated to the deceased student on-campus.
- Do not dedicate yearbooks, songs, or sporting events to the deceased student.
- Establish school policies to discourage T-shirts, bracelets, and other forms of student memorializing that could impact other students at elevated risk.
- Anticipate student needs on anniversaries of a student’s death.



### MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (call or chat):  
 SuicidePreventionLifeline.org  
 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
 Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741



For help with school and community postvention, contact Jenna Heise, Texas Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Texas Health and Human Services Commission: [jenna.heise@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:jenna.heise@hhsc.state.tx.us)

Crisis Lines - Texas HHSC Helpline  
 Dial 211 or call 1-877-541-7905  
[211texas.org](http://211texas.org)

Texas Youth Hotline: 1-800-989-6884  
 Text: 512-872-5777 / Chat:  
[www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth\\_Hotline/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth_Hotline/)

The Trevor Project (LGBTQ Youth)  
 Call: 1-866-488-7368  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
[hhsc.texas.gov](http://hhsc.texas.gov)

NAMI Texas  
[www.NamiTexas.org](http://www.NamiTexas.org)

Texas Suicide Prevention Council  
[TexasSuicidePrevention.org](http://TexasSuicidePrevention.org)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

National Institute of Mental Health  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

American Association of Suicidology  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

This factsheet was developed by Merily H. Keller in collaboration with Scott Poland, Ph.D., Frank Zenere, Ed.S, and assistance from the Texas Suicide Prevention Council. Additional information provided by the *After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools*, second edition, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Suicide Prevention Resource Center, Education Development Center.

This factsheet is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat or manage any physical or mental health concern. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council, its contractors, or sponsoring organizations. Please seek medical or mental health advice from a mental health professional. If you or someone you know is in crisis or at risk of suicide, contact 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.