

POSTVENTION FOR SCHOOLS

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



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 suggest 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

TexasSuicidePrevention.org

admin@texassuicideprevention.org

[@StopTXSuicides](#) [bit.ly/2UHgzlc](#)

A program of NAMI Texas



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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

Crisis Lines - Texas HHSC Helpline
Dial 211 or call 1-877-541-7905
211texas.org

Texas Youth Hotline: 1-800-989-6884
Text: 512-872-5777 / Chat:
www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth_Hotline/

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

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)
www.samhsa.gov

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
hhsc.texas.gov

NAMI Texas
www.NamiTexas.org

Texas Suicide Prevention Council
TexasSuicidePrevention.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
afsp.org

American Association of Suicidology
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.