

# WDE Project AWARE

## SUICIDE POSTVENTION GUIDE FOR SCHOOL

Prepared by The Wyoming Project AWARE Advisory Council



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### **Wyoming Department of Education**

122 W. 25th St., Ste. E200 | Cheyenne, WY 82002  
P: 307-631-5377 | F: 307-777-6234 | [edu.wyoming.gov](http://edu.wyoming.gov)

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## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**Objective:** to create a comprehensive resource that can support schools, school districts, families, and communities after an unexpected death.

Our hope is to provide schools in Wyoming a scaffolded and supported frame of reference to suicide postvention. We also hope to acknowledge the current reality of postvention and provide resources that inform responses for all schools. Our goal is not to recreate a comprehensive resource, but to cull the best resources from the materials that already exist and provide resources to enhance a school's ability to respond with resources specific to support our districts.

As such, this resource is one that gathers from best practice across the field of suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. This guide synthesizes information from examples in this area of practice, including:

- AFSP's [After a Suicide](#)
- Hazelden's [Lifelines Postvention](#)
- SAMHSA's [Preventing Suicide](#)
- Forefront [Suicide Prevention](#)

## SUICIDE POSTVENTION IN SCHOOLS

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The grief associated with a death by suicide can be quite overwhelming. When a school community experiences a loss by suicide the effects can be felt on various levels. Using protocols that follow model guidance and knowing where to turn for help is critical. Suicide is often sudden and unexpected, leaving loss survivors unprepared and looking for answers as to why this person took their life. This guide includes information, directions and resources to help prepare and support you as you navigate this territory.

In a perfect world:

- School resources would be in place before a crisis occurs
- Community partners would be identified and trained
- Postvention procedures would be reviewed regularly
- The school and/or district crisis team would have practiced responding to postvention situations

Postvention refers to activities that help reduce future suicides along with those that promote healing while also managing and containing the impact of the loss. Some schools will want to plan a postvention activities where community members who have been personally affected by a recent suicide can come together to ask questions, learn more about recognizing and preventing suicide and know where to turn for additional support. The primary goals of postvention are to help school community members, as they begin the grieving process while simultaneously responding to the crisis aspect of the death. When conducted using model guidance, this level of awareness, education and connection to others can help to reduce the likelihood of future suicides. It is important to remember that postvention activities are open to any individual who feels they have been impacted and not only those who were close to the person who died by suicide.

## What is Suicide Postvention

An organized response in the aftermath of a suicide attempt or death that:

- Provides opportunities to start healing from the grief and distress of suicide loss. These healing activities can mitigate future risks of suicide and other negative effects
- Recognizes that suicide can present a unique form of trauma exposure
- Ensures that individuals/families who have experienced a suicide and/or suicide attempt are offered support and a path to recovery
- Almost all of the principles of suicide postvention apply to traumatic deaths under any circumstance

### Why are postvention protocols needed?

- Postvention provides:
  - Space for grieving
  - Care for those experiencing loss
  - Identification and protection for others at risk
  - Postvention protocols ensure consistency in response, no matter the cause of death, and should codify procedure in school policy

### A school's role in postvention helps to:

- Maintain structure and order of the school routine
- Manage reactions to the death with developmentally appropriate and supportive interventions
- Provide support and resources to the school community in order to recognize and minimize suicide contagion risk

### Proper postvention helps the school community process a death by suicide more safely, mitigating:

- Feelings of blame, responsibility, betrayal, and potential staff burnout
- Complicated grief/loss, both in the short and long term
- Risk potential for cluster/copycat deaths
- Difficulty focusing on academics and other activities

### Postvention not only responds to a death, but it is also a critical prevention tool. Schools should use best practice guidelines, and include the following in their postvention planning:

- Crisis response
- Helping students cope
- Involving parents
- Model language for notifications
- Working with community/media
- Safe messaging
- Safe ways to remember the person (Memorialization)
- Addressing needs when school is not in session

## Using Model Guidance

Postvention activities commonly take place within school settings, yet very few school staff are aware of suggested guidelines on ways to safely conduct them (Wei, Szumilas, Kutcher, 2009). It is important that schools prepare for postvention before a suicide. This includes training your school staff, students, and parents. Community members also need training. i.e., funeral directors, faith leaders, emergency departments, law enforcement, health professionals, media, and journalists.

Schools should incorporate postvention as a component of an overall comprehensive plan, which should form and identify a school-based crisis team. Ensure that the crisis plan aligns with current district and community plans. Smaller districts may need to combine roles as necessary.

## Crisis Team Formation and Roles

A crisis team is an identified set of individuals that will implement the school crisis plan in the event of a suicide or another tragic event. They will also be responsible for determining the longer-term needs in the aftermath of the death and assisting in the development of a plan to address those needs. It is best to identify and prepare the crisis team proactively so that they are ready with the proper resources already in place to respond to a crisis before one occurs. Crisis response teams are often composed of school administrators and leadership, school nurses, mental health providers, resource officers, and/or IT.

### Roles and Responsibilities within the Crisis Team

- **Crisis Team Leader:** This person is the project leader and team manager. They should remain the consistent and central point of contact throughout the response.
- **Public Information Officer:** Gathers information, monitors media coverage, and social media.
- **Family Support Officer:** Coordinate deceased family needs including removal of student belongings, and support services for the families interaction with the school district. At least two members who follow the daily schedule of the deceased and siblings who can also provide support to faculty.
- **Staff Support Officer:** Distributes information to staff, coordinates the logistics of the staffing and protocol for care stations. Addresses all issues affecting the physical school building for any meetings, transportations, and coordinates law enforcement if needed.
- **Student Support Officer:** Coordinates student schedule in support of students who would regularly interact with the deceased student. Two or more members of the team who can coordinate crisis contacts for vulnerable students.
- **Community Support Officer:** Community partners: Public Health, Community Behavioral Health Centers, Youth Centers, and community based service providers: Informs agencies of the school's plans, arranges volunteers and support from local mental health resources.

## Safe Messaging

Always follow best practice guidelines, including:

- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Model School District Policy for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center's \(SPRC\) After Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, Second Edition](#)
- [Reporting on Suicide Webpage](#)

Talking about suicide is critical and we have a responsibility to balance being truthful with the school community and the need to be sensitive to the family.

- **If the family does NOT wish to permit disclosure:**  
"The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time."
- **Use this opportunity to talk about the phenomenon of suicide:**  
"We know there has been a lot of talk about whether this was a suicide death. Since the subject of suicide has been raised, we want to take this opportunity to give you accurate information about suicide in general, ways to prevent it, and how to get help if you or someone you know is feeling depressed or may be suicidal."

Follow guidelines on safe messaging about suicide. Talk should center around the fact that the school has lost a valuable member of its school community, not on the circumstances of the death.

**Remember:** It is particularly important to avoid idealizing the person and glorifying suicide. Talk about the person in a balanced manner. Don't be afraid to include struggles that were known - especially in individual conversations about the death. If the student's struggles are not mentioned, it can cause confusion and give the impression that suicide is an effective way of addressing one's distress - especially among the other students.

## Addressing Cultural Diversity

Postvention efforts need to take into consideration the cultural diversity of everyone affected by a suicide, including the family, school, and community. This diversity may include differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, and disability. Culture may significantly affect the way people view and respond to suicide and death. Key points involving cultural differences include the following:

- Be aware that the extent to which people can talk about suicide varies greatly, and in some cultures, suicide is still seen as a moral failing
- Be sensitive to the beliefs and customs regarding the family and community, including rituals, funerals, the appropriate person to contact, etc.
- Be sensitive to how the family or community may need to respond to the death before individuals outside of the family or community intervene to provide support
- Engage a "cultural broker" to act as a liaison between the family, community, and school if key members of school staff are not from the same racial, ethnic, or religious group as the person who died by suicide
- Bring in interpreters and translators if there are language differences. If possible, have resource materials in different languages available for parents

## STEPS IN POSTVENTION

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### Initial Steps

#### Verify the Death, Determine Facts

- As soon as a school receives news that a community member has died by suicide, the first step is to verify the news and confirm the death.

#### Contact Family

- The school should assign a point of contact with the family. Schools may find they establish better rapport with a family in crisis when communication is done in person (this is not always possible)
- Offer Condolences
- Ask what supports the school can offer to the family
- Ask the family to identify the student's circle of friends who may need extra care and assistance
- Discuss the plan to communicate the death to the larger school community
  - Explain to the family how sharing the cause of death (suicide) can be positive for the grieving process of the entire school community
  - Must have verbal consent from family before releasing any cause of death to the school community
- Ask the family to identify someone the school can contact to stay apprised of the family's needs and plans, including funeral arrangements

## **Convene Crisis Response Team to Initiate the Postvention Process Immediately**

- Activate crisis team using internal and external resources
- Review role-specific tasks and identify additional needs
  - This may include gathering sources of support from response team members
- Create scripts for dissemination of information to all members of the school community, with staff being notified first
  - If the family does NOT give permission for disclosing the death as a suicide, their wish must be granted. Instead, say “sudden death”, “accidental death”, “they died” (Prepare for possible pushback from parents, staff, and students who want you to verify)
- Set the agenda for Staff Meeting on Day 1

When a young person dies by suicide, it affects the entire community. Knowing where to find resources is essential. If your school has not navigated this kind of loss and are not sure where to look for support, reaching out to your district or local ESD can link to resources. Support can also come from local mental health service providers

The National Center for School Crisis & Bereavement (NCSB) also provides free immediate technical assistance and training to schools and communities that are responding to crises, with a focus on supporting students, both short-term and throughout long-term recovery. 24-hour help is available.

1-877-536-2722 | [helpnow@schoolcrisiscenter.org](mailto:helpnow@schoolcrisiscenter.org)

## **Before School, Day 1**

### **Inform Staff Connect with Community Supports**

Notify staff of death and hold staff meetings (phone tree, email, crisis alert system, other methods). If possible, those that worked directly with the student should get a more personal notification

- This initial notice should include notice of staff meeting, any other schedule/changes to normal procedure, and support (e.g., available EAP)
  - Contact appropriate community support resources
  - Notify other administrators at sibling and/or “feeder” schools

### **Prepare for Day 1**

- Set up care stations and staffing
- Remove student's name from automated call system
- Arrange to remove the student's belongings from his or her locker and/or desk(s)

## **Day 1**

### **Conduct Staff Meeting Before School**

- This meeting should include accurate and verifiable information, at least three crisis resources, and what the school is doing or provide support to the school community
- Attendance sign in sheet (or another attendance tracking), staff not in attendance will need appropriate follow up information
- Review roles and responsibilities
- Share verifiable facts of student's death (method should not be shared)
- Review procedure for responding to impromptu memorials

- Offer time for questions and sharing feelings
- Identify staff to follow student's schedule
- Identify and generate list of students of concern
- Explain how students can access care stations—including information about referral process, locations, and staffing.
- Review announcement to be read by teachers in classrooms or small groups (advisory, homeroom, etc.). Ensure the classroom of the deceased has more support beyond the teacher (i.e., school based mental health professional)

### **Additional Day 1 Steps**

- **REMOVE FAMILY** from mass notifications
- Monitor care stations
- Share communication with families
  - This should include accurate and verifiable information (that aligns with family's wishes), at least three crisis resources, and what the school is doing of provide support to students and larger school community
- Conduct a voluntary end-of-day staff meeting and discuss plan for next day with staff roles identified
- Crisis response team should debrief implementation of postvention plan at end of day

### **Identify Students of Concern**

- Use safety planning for students who...
- Were close friends, siblings, and/or romantic relationships
- Have a known history of substance use/abuse or mental health treatment
- Had the same classes or activities i.e., athletics, clubs, church
- Experienced a similar loss
- New to the district/school and for whom little may be known
- Feel responsible for recent negative interaction(s) with the deceased

### **End of Day 1 Announcements**

Below are examples of communications you might share with a school community at the end of the first day.

#### **▪ To Students:**

Dear Students, Today has been a sad day for all of us. We encourage you to talk about your reactions to the death with your friends, your family and whoever else gives you support. We will have counselors here again tomorrow to help us in dealing with our loss. We are in this together.

#### **▪ To Families:**

Dear Families, Today was a hard day for each and every one of us in various ways. We are grateful for your partnership as our school community grieves. [The Dougy Center](#) provides expert guidance on how to talk to your child about suicide; we know this can be a complex and difficult subject.

Remember that grief is a complex journey, not something you simply get over; it will look different for each of our students, staff, and families. Your child may not show any signs today, tomorrow, or a week from now, but they may in a few months. Never hesitate to reach out to our school's counseling team, or our community partners (listed below), and please continue to watch for signs of emotional stress, such as hopelessness, rage/anger, recklessness/risky behaviors, including increased alcohol and drug use, withdrawing/isolation, and anxiety/agitation. We will be walking with your family on each part of this journey, The Crisis Response Team



- **To Staff:**

Dear Staff, Today was a hard day for each and every one of us in various ways. Keep in mind that self-care is very important at such a time. If you need coverage for your classes in the upcoming days, please do not hesitate to reach out to a counselor or administrator. We are here to help! Grief is a complex journey, not something you simply get over. Students may not show any signs today, tomorrow, or a week from now, but they may in a few months. Never hesitate to reach out, and please continue to watch for signs of emotional stress, such as hopelessness, rage/anger, recklessness/risky behaviors, including increased alcohol and drug use, withdrawing/isolation, and anxiety/agitation. Thank you all for your help in making today as normal as possible and for supporting our students in their time of need. Don't forget to use our EAP resources as needed, and finally, remember to have these crisis numbers in your phone!

## Days 2–5

### Steps to Complete on days 2–5

- Communicate plans for Funeral and/or Memorial Services
- Assess the school's readiness to return to a regular routine. This should be done as soon as possible with accommodations available for students and staff of concern
- Care Stations are typically open 4–5 days, announce closure 1 day in advance (with additional resources on what to do if more support is needed)
- Contact all absentees to determine if their absence is related to the death
- Update faculty/staff on postvention activities including a review of how they can identify students of concern
- Offer longer term grief support to students through school and/or community resources
- Remove deceased student's personal items from the locker and desk/chair from classroom(s)—this should be done quickly and with sensitivity
- Monitor student online tributes

## Further Information

### Care Stations or Safe Rooms

- Care Stations are designated areas open to students and staff in need of assistance or support during postvention. These areas are a short-term support to a grieving community.
  - Sign in and out procedures are important pieces of documentation that will help identify students in need of support.
  - Care Stations are typically open approximately 3 days, announce closure 1 day in advance (with additional resources on what to do if more support is needed)
  - Consider establishing a care station for parents/guardians who arrive at the school for early dismissal of their children

### Community Debrief and Response

- Meeting with the parent community, as described by [After a Suicide](#) (page 53), can provide a forum for sharing accurate information and resources in the aftermath of a suicide. The meeting should be attended by the crisis response team, school administration, and include representatives from community-based resources
- Great care and planning should be taken when moving forward with a postvention activity of this size, and it is important to note that a community meeting is not always recommended. Lifelines does not recommend this practice in postvention

## School Crisis Team Debrief

- Debrief is essential for Crisis Teams as well; it allows for important process and procedural refinement and allows the Crisis team members to identify limitations to their ability to respond
- Time at the end of each day should be made to debrief, document and process. This is taxing work, and this provides an opportunity for the team to care for itself
- A team meeting should also be scheduled once the immediate need to respond has passed. This provides opportunities to discuss the lessons learned and opportunities for change
- In especially complex situations, schools may call on local or national organizations to support their crisis response. More information on “Bringing in Outside Help” can be found in [After a Suicide](#) (page 41.)

## Funerals and Memorial Services

Schools can share information about funeral and memorial services with students, families, and staff. This should be done in a consistent manner, no matter the cause of death.

Best practice in suicide postvention suggests the following when considering funerals and memorial services after a suicide:

- Services should not be held on school grounds. Instead, the school should focus on maintaining a regular schedule, structure, and routine. If services are held during school hours:
  - Students should be permitted to leave school to attend the service only with appropriate parent/guardian/family permission
  - Transportation should not be provided by the school
- The school principal or senior administrator should attend the services
- Families should be encouraged to attend the services with their student(s). This supports family involvement in the grieving process, including: the family’s ability to monitor their student’s response, opening for discussion as a family, and to remind their children that support is available if needed.

## Anniversaries and Rites of Passage

Special consideration should be given to the following dates:

- Graduation of the student’s class
- Birthdays
- Anniversary of Death
- Sports or Activity Seasons

## Memorials and Tributes

- When a student’s death is experienced by a school, there often is a request for some kind of a memorial to remember or commemorate the loss. Memorials and Tributes, whether spontaneous or those to be included in the yearbook, school newspaper, or at graduation, should follow best practice.
- Be prepared to deal with the media, especially in high profile situations. [Media Reporting Toolkit](#)-AAS Exposure to suicide in person or through social media presents risk for suicide; read [SPRC’s Online Manual](#) for more information.
- Further resources:
  - [Guidelines for Memorials after a Suicide](#)
  - [Special Considerations for Memorials](#)
  - [Memorials after Suicide - Helpful or Harmful](#)

# VIRTUAL POSTVENTION GUIDELINES

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## General Considerations

- Recognize that a full comprehensive postvention response is unlikely and will look different. That said, many of the best practices are the same
- Utilize a multidisciplinary team approach. Consider the virtual availability and accessibility of the crisis team
- Involve community crisis and mental health partners as much as possible for assistance in screening, developing safety plans, and referrals

## Messaging

- Determine what modalities and/or virtual platforms are available for communication with the school community
- Educate students and adults on identifying behaviors of concern, particularly on social media
- Emphasize self-care, self-advocacy and help seeking
- Reassess the status of community resources and support. Consider asking:
  - Is the agency or organization available to assist with postvention and what specific services are provided (e.g., crisis, screening/assessment, treatment, support groups)
  - In what ways have existing services changed (e.g., availability, accessibility, etc.)
  - What are the agency or organization's current protocols (e.g., key contacts, referral process, etc.)
- Clearly articulate and disseminate resources, such as on school webpage
- Create safe ways to memorialize such as "gifting the family with memories": giving the opportunity to share about the person in a heartfelt manner, and/or sending poems, songs, video collages

## Recovery

- Keep in mind that preexisting risk factors may intensify under times when school is not in session (school closures related to illness, weather or emergency, etc) and may impact the degree of risk and need
- In addition to standard risk assessments, assess for the emotional impact of the pandemic/virtual school on suicide risk
- Anticipate a change in the rate or ability of students and staff to "bounce back"
- Remember that communities who have had more negative experiences will likely move more slowly into recovery phases
- Getting back to "routine" is one of the pillars of recovery, especially for students and teachers who have experienced trauma

## Technology Considerations

- Consider what kind of technologies can be used (i.e. apps for safety planning, Telehealth for support groups and screening/assessment, see [Grief Work in Virtual Settings](#))
- Create systems for electronic referrals for use for the whole school community
- Monitor social media and virtual platforms within school community

## Telehealth Considerations

- Acquire knowledge about telehealth service delivery resources (see [NASP resources, 2020](#)) and ensure accessibility for students with disabilities or lack of internet
- Virtual connections to the family of a suicide victim are not preferred. After attending carefully to local physical distancing requirements, school suicide postvention should determine if a home visit is possible and appropriate
- When conducting virtual assessments, request the person's location at the start of the session, their emergency contact info, and a contact plan if the session is interrupted
- If the risk is imminent, stay on the phone if possible until the person is in care of a professional or support who can accompany them to the hospital.

# SOURCES

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## Sources Cited

This guide was developed by corroborating the following resources:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists & The Trevor Project (2019). Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary, and Resources (2nd ed.). New York: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, & Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2018). After a suicide: A toolkit for schools (2nd ed.). Waltham, MA: Education Development Center.
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  - <https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Guidelines-Death-Student-or-Staff-Booklet-Format.pdf>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools. HHS Publication No. SMA-12-4669. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2012.
- Underwood, M.M., Fell, F.T., & Spinazzola, N.A. (2018). Lifelines Postvention: Responding to Suicide and Other Traumatic Death. Hazelden.

## Additional Resources

### Behavioral Health Navigator Contact List

- For a list of current Behavioral Health Navigator contact information please visit the OSPI Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention [Webpage](#)

### Resources from Specific Organizations

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center's (SPRC)
- [After a Suicide: A toolkit for schools \(2nd edition\)](#)
- [University of Washington Forefront Suicide Prevention in Schools](#)
  - [Forefront Postvention Guide](#)
  - [Forefront's List of Resources in the Aftermath of Suicide and other deaths](#) includes Seattle area resources and national resources for support as well as links to further resources
  - [Forefront's Postvention: Community Debrief](#) PPT oriented for teachers/staff
  - [Forefront's Talking Tips for the Classroom](#): talking points following a suicide for staff

- Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)
  - [MHTTC's After a School Tragedy...Readiness, Response, Recovery, & Resources](#) Provides an overview for response and recovery, more links to resources, including specifics for supporting students/families as well as resources by age group
  - [MHTTC Pacific Southwest: Support Resources after a Suicide](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
  - [NASP's Preventing Suicide: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams \(2018\)](#) provides a high-level overview of postvention
- NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee's [Recovery From Large-Scale Crises: Guidelines for School Administrators and Crisis Teams \(2018\)](#)

### Templates, Toolkits, and Guidelines

- [NCSCB's Sample Letter Templates for Notification](#)
- [Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)
- [Recovery from Large-Scale Crises: Guidelines for Crisis Teams and Administrators](#)
- [Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines](#) from Survivors of Suicide Loss Task Force (2015). Presents national guidelines, overview of research, and strategic goals.
- [Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Guidelines from Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program](#). Section 5 (p.20-25) outlines postvention and the Appendix has resources such as a flow charts, re-entry protocols, referral templates, list of common reactions and recommended responses

### Resources for Memorials

- [Centre for Suicide Prevention: School Memorials \(Canadian MH association\)](#)
- [Memorials: Special Considerations When Memorializing an Incident](#)
- [Memorials After a Suicide: Guidelines for Schools and Families \(SPTS\)](#)
- ["School Memorials: Should We? How Should We?"](#) from National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children

### Resources for Virtual Hybrid Specific Considerations

- [COVID-19 Pandemic Resources from the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#)
- [Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention in a Time of Distance Learning](#)
- [Guidance for School Postvention During COVID-19](#)
- [Preparing for a Return to the Classroom: Suicide Prevention in Schools](#)
- [Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention During COVID-19: What School-Based Staff Need to Know](#)

### Resources for Grief

- [After a Suicide Resource Directory](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#) Video and Downloadable Grief Support Modules for School Personnel
- [Grief Support from DOH](#)
- [Resources for Survivors of Suicide](#)
- [Rocky Mountain MIRECC for Suicide Prevention](#)

- [SPRC Recommended Resources](#)
- [Supporting Children and Teens after a Suicide Death from The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families](#)

## National Resources

### Crisis Services

- The Lifeline and 988 | <https://988lifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/>
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)  
1-800-273-8255 | 24 hours / 7 days a week
- [Crisis Text Line](#)  
Text HOME to 741741 | 877-968-8491 | 24 hours / 7 days a week
- [Teen Line](#)  
800-852-8336 | Text: TEEN to 839863 | Nationwide, from 6pm to 10pm PST.
- [TrevorLifeline](#)  
1-866-488-7386 | 24 hours / 7 days a week

### Services Specific to Suicide and Schools

- [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#), 1-877-536-2722  
Provides on-site and remote technical assistance/consultation for K–12 school leadership and support staff, advice via email, a 24/7 toll-free number, ongoing support in the immediate aftermath and recovery period of a crisis, educational resources and crisis management to school staff, training/community presentations, as well as professional development for a range of professional audiences. They also provide a Guidelines for Schools Responding to Death designed to help schools respond to the needs of students and staff after a suicide.
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#)  
SPRC is a wealth of information and the only federally supported resource center devoted to advancing the implementation of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#).
- [Forefront Suicide Prevention](#)  
A center dedicated to advocacy, training and empowering individuals, schools and communities in creating systemic change leading to sustainability and restoring hope.

### Grief Support Services

- [Dougy Center](#), 503-775-5683 Provides grief support and resources.
- [Crisis Connections](#)  
Offers programs/groups to help survivors navigate complicated grief due to a suicide loss
- [Evergreen Health](#)  
Grief and bereavement support
- [Washington Department of Health Grief Support and Resources](#)
- [Bridges Center for Grieving Children](#) Supporting families of children 4–18
- [Healing Center](#)  
Grief support community for adults, children, and families in Seattle
- [Eluna Resource Center / Explaining Suicide to Children](#) Supporting children/families impacted by grief/addiction
- [Safe Crossings](#)  
Dedicated to helping children who have lost a parent, sibling, or other loved one heal and thrive

## GLOSSARY

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**Care Stations** (schools may also choose to use the term **safe room**) are designated areas where students and staff in need of assistance or support during postvention. These areas provide additional short-term support to a grieving community.

**Postvention** refers to programs and interventions for survivors following a death by suicide. These activities help alleviate the suffering and emotional distress of suicide survivors and help prevent suicide contagion. The primary goals are to promote healing while also managing and containing the impact of the loss. When conducted using model guidance, this level of awareness, education and connection to others can help to reduce the likelihood of future suicides. It is important to remember that postvention activities are open to any individual who feels they have been impacted and not only those who were close to the person who died by suicide.

**Suicide contagion** is “a process by which the suicide or suicidal behavior of one or more persons influences others to commit or attempt suicide” (Davidson and Gould, 1989).

**A survivor** (or **suicide survivor**) is a person who has experienced the suicide of a family member, friend, or colleague. A person who attempts suicide but does not die is an attempt survivor. The distinctions among the categories of people who may need support in the aftermath of suicide is further explored later (pp. 9–13) through a new conceptualization that uses the terms exposed to suicide, affected by suicide, and short-term bereaved by suicide, and long-term bereaved by suicide (Cerel, McIntosh, Neimeyer, Maple, & Marshall, 2014).



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