

Suicide Postvention Policy:  
Name of School

**Suicide Response Team:**

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- School Counselors
- School Psychologists
- School Social Workers
- School Nurse
- School Resource Officer (as needed)
- Superintendent (as needed)

**Suicide Response Coordinator:** Lead School Counselor

**Backup Suicide Response Coordinator:** Alternate School Counselor or Designee

**Initial Responsibilities:**

1. Convene the Suicide Response Team in the Command Center.
2. Ensure that each member of the Suicide Response Team has a copy of the completed suicide response plan.
3. Ensure that each person who has the lead responsibility or backup responsibility for a particular step has the tools necessary to complete the task.
4. Tape a Master Copy of the Immediate Response Checklist to the table of the Command Center so that team members can confirm when their tasks have been completed.

**Immediate Response Checklist:**

The Suicide Response Team will work through the Immediate Response Checklist, as assigned, until it is completed. Upon completion of a designated task, the responsible individual will fill out the TASK COMPLETED box on the Master Copy of the checklist in the Command Center.

**Summer Response Checklist:**

If a suicide occurs during a long-term school break, the school will tailor the Immediate Response Checklist to facilitate a more appropriate response. Be sure to include the following:

- Verify student death
- Notify suicide response team
- Notify superintendent's office
- Notify district crisis team
- Contact and coordinate with external mental health professionals
- Outreach and coordinate with family of deceased
- Notify all school staff
- Notify students and parents
- Offer specific student/parent/staff support times at the school
  - Include crisis counselors from KSPHQ
  - Identify which members of the suicide response team will be present
- Prepare to acknowledge the suicide death when students return to school
  - Teachers will read a sample script to students similar to **Beginning of Day 2**
  - Crisis counselors will be onsite or on-call

## IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Steps to Take in the Immediate Aftermath	Staff Responsible	External Contacts (Phone Numbers)	TASK COMPLETED
<b>NOTIFY KEY INDIVIDUALS</b>			
1. Verify Death	Lead:  Backup:	Police: (dispatch)  (after hours supervisor)  Chief:  Coroner:  Parent/Guardian:	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
2. Notify Suicide Response Team	Lead:  Backup:	See Initiate Suicide Response Team Phone Tree	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
3. Identify suicide response coordinator and establish Command Center	Lead:  Backup:		<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
4. Ensure that office staff are aware of and have copies of the Inquiry Response Protocol  (Appendix A)	Lead:  Backup:	Office Staff Contacts:	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

<p>5. Notify superintendent's office</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>Superintendent's Contact:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>
<p>6. Notify district crisis team</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>District Crisis Team Names and Contact Info:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>
<p>7. Notify schools attended by family members of deceased</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>Other relevant schools and contacts for each:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>
<p>8. Contact and coordinate with external mental health professionals</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>KSPHQ Admin: 785-841-9900</p> <p>KSPHQ Hotline: 785-841-2345</p> <p>Community Mental Health Center:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

<p>9. Reach out to and work with the family of the deceased  (Appendix B)</p>	<p>Leads:  Backups:</p>	<p>Family of Deceased Contact Info:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p><b>NOTIFY SCHOOL COMMUNITY</b></p>			
<p>10. Notify all faculty and staff  (Appendix C)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p>11. Prepare teachers to notify student and ensure they have tangible copies of the script and talking points to support students  (Appendix D) (Appendix F)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p>12. Notify families of students about the death and the school's response  (Appendix E)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

SUPPORT STUDENTS AND STAFF			
<p>13. Provide periodic check ins and continued support for staff  (Appendix F)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>KSPHQ: 785-841-2345  Community Mental Health Center:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p>14. Identify, monitor, and support students who may be at risk</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>KSPHQ: 785-841-2345  Community Mental Health Center:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p>15. Implement steps to help students with emotional regulation  (Stanley-Brown Safety Plan)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>KSPHQ: 785-841-2345  Community Mental Health Center:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>
<p>16. Participate in and/or advise on appropriate memorialization in the immediate aftermath  (Appendix G)</p>	<p>Leads:  Backups:</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:</p>

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

MINIMIZE RISK OF CONTAGION THROUGH THE MEDIA			
<p>17. Work with press/media  (Appendix H)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>	<p>Local Media Requests:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>
<p>18. Monitor social media  (Appendix I)</p>	<p>Lead:  Backup:</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed</p> <p>Initials:</p> <p>Date/Time:</p>

**NOTES:**

## APPENDIX A

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Guidelines for Managing Inquiries in Early Stages

Office staff should utilize this protocol to ensure appropriate responses to phone calls and other inquiries received in the early stages of a suicide crisis.

#### Informational Script for Parents

\*This script should be used when parents are calling to ask for clarification about whether or not the news they've been given is true.

*Today all students were informed that one of their peers, [insert student's name], has died by suicide. This is the only verified information we have at the moment. Crisis counselors and school staff are working to support students individually and in groups. If you'd like to remove your child from school today, you are welcome to do so. We are encouraging students not to be alone right now in order to minimize risk and increase safety and support. You will be receiving correspondence later this afternoon that includes resources and information about the school's plan to support students ongoing. If you need immediate assistance, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.*

Follow the guidelines below for other inquiries.

- **Calls unrelated to the crisis:** Take messages to keep short
- **Police or other security professionals:** Refer to Principal or Assistant Principal
- **Family members of the deceased:** Refer to Principal (interrupt anything)
- **Other school administrators:** Give out basic information about the death and crisis response; Offer to transfer to Assistant Principal
- **Parents regarding their child's immediate safety:** Read informational script; Transfer to crisis team if absolutely necessary
- **Persons who call with information about others at risk:** Take down detailed information - social media posts, names of students, verbatim statements, etc. - and get it to a crisis team member immediately; Take a phone number where the person can be called back by a crisis team member
- **Media:** Release no information; Refer to District Office
- **Parents generally wanting to know how to respond:** Read informational script, relay resources that parents can utilize; Take messages for crisis team members if parents want further information
  - Resource list to include:
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
    - Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ 785-841-2345
    - [Supporting Children After Suicide Loss](#)
- **Where to send parents who arrive at the school unannounced:** Designate a space for parents to wait and get information. Provide those parents with tips for supporting their child and inform them of the school's plans to continue support. Any person removing a student from school must be on the annual registration form as the parent or guardian. Records must be kept of who removed the student and when.

## APPENDIX B

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Guidelines for Working with the Family

Representatives from the school should follow the guidelines below when working with the family of the deceased student.

1. Appoint two representatives (administrator and counselor/social worker) from the school to engage the family.
2. Representatives should reach out to the family via phone call and request an in-person visit (preferably in the family's home, if possible; certainly not at the school).
  - a. If the deceased student splits time between two or more households, coordinate to the best of your ability (the District Office might be a neutral ground for meeting jointly).

During the visit with the family, the school representatives should:

- Offer the condolences of the school.
- Inquire about funeral arrangements. Ask if the funeral will be private or if the family will allow students to attend.
- Ask if the parents/guardians know of any other students who may be especially upset or at risk.
- Provide parents/guardians with information about grief counseling (brochures/materials).
  - Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ
  - Create a resource list prior to visiting
- Ask the family if they would like their child's personal belongings returned.
  - Items found in student's locker
  - In-class projects, homework assignments, etc.
  - Any account balances/credits
- Give the option to take any school property with you at this time or let them know that you can follow up in a few weeks to return school property (ipad, books, etc.)
- Briefly explain to the parents/guardians what the school is doing to respond to the death, why this response is important, and ask if there is any information they would like to remain private.
- Provide a point-of-contact to the family for any future questions, needs, or concerns.

## APPENDIX C

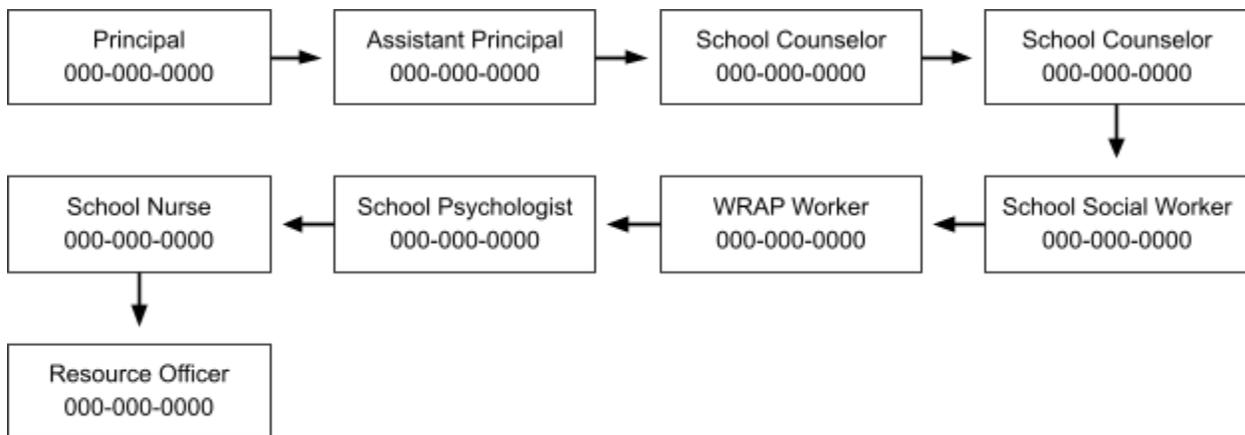
### Suicide Postvention Policy: Guidelines for Notifying Staff of a Student Suicide

#### Notification Protocol for Non-School Hours

If the news of a student's suicide arrives during non-school hours, follow these steps:

1. Initiate Suicide Response Team Phone Tree utilizing the guidelines below
2. Send out a mass message to all staff (phone call, text, and email)
3. Hold an emergency staff meeting before school opens with the following goals:
  - a. Inform the faculty of the facts
  - b. Acknowledge their grief and loss
  - c. Prepare them to notify and support students with these handouts:
    - i. Sample announcement (Appendix D)
    - ii. Guidelines for Supporting Students (Appendix F)
    - iii. School and Community Resource List (Appendix L)
4. Take attendance and identify staff who were not in attendance

#### Suicide Response Team Phone Tree



#### Phone Tree Notification Guidelines:

- Notify via phone call, not via text or email
- Do not leave voicemails; if they don't answer, text them to request a phone call asap
- After 5 minutes of no response, call the next person on the phone tree
  - If your original contact responds after this, let them know you have already called the next person
- Confirm continuance of phone tree with your contact
- Keep conversations short and process feelings later
- If you cannot continue the phone tree, ask the person who notified you to do so for you

#### All Staff Notification

*Teachers and staff, this message is to inform you that there is a mandatory emergency meeting [this morning/tomorrow morning] at [insert time]. It is imperative that you attend this meeting to adequately prepare for the difficult day ahead, as we have lost one of our students to suicide. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please report to the office as soon as you arrive at school so you can be briefed and prepped before walking into your classroom. Thank you.*

## APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

### Notification Protocol for School Hours

If the news of a student's suicide arrives during school hours, follow these steps:

1. Convene Suicide Response Team immediately
2. Identify which Suicide Response Team members will be responsible for each zone
3. Ensure at least 15 minutes are left in class to begin notification protocol

Guidelines for Notifying Staff:

- Ask to speak with the staff privately in the hallway
- Inform the staff of the facts, acknowledge grief and loss, invite them to emergency all-staff meeting after school, and prepare them to support and identify students who may be at-risk
- Provide the following handouts:
  - Sample script to be read to students in their classroom (Appendix D)
  - Guidelines for Staff Supporting Students (Appendix F)

### Notification Zoning Map (EXAMPLE)



## APPENDIX D

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Sample Scripts for Notifying Students

#### **For an Official Suicide: Notification Announcement, Day 1**

\*This announcement should always be made in classrooms, preferably by teachers. It should never be made over a school's PA system, over email, or in assemblies.

*Today we learned the extremely sad news that [insert student name] took his/her/their life [insert timeline - last night/this morning/yesterday]. Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission. We are saddened by [insert student's name]'s death and will keep [his/her/their] family and friends in our hearts.*

*I know this news is difficult to take in, and whatever you are feeling right now is valid and okay. I'm here to support you, and there are crisis counselors available today for anyone who wants to talk. Please let me or your other teachers know if you'd like to speak to a crisis counselor at any point throughout the day.*

#### **For a Suspicious Death Not Declared Suicide: Notification Announcement, Day 1**

\*This announcement should always be made in classrooms, preferably by teachers. It should never be made over a school's PA system, over email, or in assemblies.

*Today we learned the extremely sad news that [insert student name] died [insert timeline - last night/this morning/yesterday]. This is the only information we have officially received on the circumstances surrounding this death. Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission. We are saddened by [insert student's name]'s death and will keep [his/her/their] family and friends in our hearts.*

*I know this news is difficult to take in, and whatever you are feeling right now is valid and okay. I'm here to support you, and there are crisis counselors available today for anyone who wants to talk. Please let me or your other teachers know if you'd like to speak to a crisis counselor at any point throughout the day.*

#### **Moment of Silence Announcement, End of Day 1**

\*This announcement should be made by a school administrator at the end of Day 1, prior to dismissal. It is appropriate for this announcement to be made over the school's PA system.

*Today has been a sad and difficult day for all of us. We encourage you to talk about [insert student's name]'s death with your friends, your family, and whoever else gives you support. We will have special staff here for you tomorrow to help in dealing with our loss. Let us end the day by having the whole school offer a moment of silence for [insert student's name].*

*Thank you. Take care of yourselves and stay safe.*

## **APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)**

### **Supportive Announcement, Beginning of Day 2**

\*This announcement should be made by teachers in classrooms at the very beginning of Day 2. It should not be made over the school's PA system, over email, or in an assembly. It can include additional verified information, re-emphasize the continuing availability of in-school support, and provide information to facilitate grief.

*We know that yesterday was difficult and emotional. Learning about a suicide death can be confusing and painful, and we know those feelings don't go away overnight. Even though we might try to understand the reasons why this has happened, we can never really know what was going on that led [insert student's name] to this decision. One thing that's important to remember is that there is never just one reason for a suicide. There are many reasons or causes, and we will never be able to figure them all out. Not having closure is an especially hard part of grieving a suicide-loss, and I'm sorry that any of us has to experience that.*

*Today we begin the process of returning to a normal schedule in school. This may prove very difficult for some of us and it may be a welcomed relief to others. Like we said yesterday, there is no "right way" to feel. Please know that counselors are still available in school to help us deal with our feelings. If you want to speak to a counselor, either alone or with a friend, please tell a teacher or another staff member and we will help make arrangements.*

### **Funeral Services Announcement**

\*This announcement should be made by teachers in classrooms. It should not be made over the school's PA system, over email, or in an assembly.

*We have information about [insert student's name]'s funeral services. The visitation will be held on [insert date, time, and place] and the funeral will be on [insert date, time, place]. In order to be excused from school to attend the funeral, you will need to have your parent's permission. We also encourage you to ask your parents to go with you to the visitation.*

## APPENDIX E

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Notifying Families of Death and Response Plan

#### REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE

##### **Written Correspondence to Families, Day 1:**

\*This letter should be sent home with students and emailed to parents/guardians. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

*Dear Parents/Guardians,*

*I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died by suicide [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.*

*All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them. Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer.*

*Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school is consulting with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ (KSPHQ) to create a plan for ongoing support. KSPHQ serves as the leading expert in suicide prevention for Kansas. In addition to answering the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for the state, they also provide education, training, and consultation regarding best practices for suicide care. As a part of their crisis response services, KSPHQ offers specialized support to schools and communities after a suicide loss.*

*Suicide prevention experts suggest that talking openly about suicide is the safest and most protective thing we can do for our students. They also recommend that these conversations be ongoing, not time-limited. Similarly, we have come to understand that providing lasting support to students after a suicide death is best practice.*

*Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend.*

*I have included links and attachments in this email to help you navigate this difficult time with your child and to ensure that you have access to supports available to you.*

- [10 Ways to Support a Loved One Who Has Lost Someone to Suicide](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- [Crisis Text Line](#)

*If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.*

*Take care,*

[insert signature]

[attach script, Appendices F and L, and KSPHQ info sheet about calling NSPL]

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE

#### **Voice Message to Families, Day 1:**

\*This script should be read as an Aptegey phone message. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

*Hello. This is [insert name], Principal at [insert school].*

*I am delivering this message with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died by suicide [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.*

*All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. I have sent all parents and guardians a letter which includes the script that was read to students along with valuable resources. This letter has been sent out via email and all students have paper copies to bring home. If you don't have access to this letter, please call us so that we can ensure you have all of the information we've been able to provide.*

*Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer.*

*Because we understand that grief is complex, ongoing, and unique to each person, our school administration is consulting with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ (KSPHQ) to create a plan for ongoing student support. KSPHQ serves as the leading expert in suicide prevention for Kansas. In addition to answering the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for the entire state, they also provide education, training, and consultation regarding best practices for suicide care. As a part of their crisis response services, KSPHQ offers specialized support to schools and communities after a suicide loss.*

*Suicide prevention experts suggest that talking openly about suicide is the safest and most protective thing we can do for our students. They also recommend that these conversations be ongoing, not time-limited. Similarly, we have come to understand that providing lasting support to students after a suicide death is best practice.*

*Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend.*

*If you are concerned about yourself or your child, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for immediate support. Their phone number is 1-800-273-8255. And of course, please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.*

*Thank you and take care.*

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### **REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE**

#### **Written Correspondence to Families, End of Week 1:**

\*This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email.

*Hello Parents and Guardians,*

*We want to acknowledge the immense difficulty of this week as our community continues to process and grieve the suicide-loss of [insert student name]. In the face of adversity, we have witnessed our students, our teachers and staff, and our parents and guardians display profound strength, resilience, and support. For this, we are extremely grateful.*

*It's important to us that we keep you informed on all the steps we are taking to support the safety and well-being of our students. We will continue to collaborate with KSPHQ for the remainder of the school year, and will communicate any support plans to you accordingly.*

*Funeral services for [insert student name] will take place on [insert date and time]. As a reminder, students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend. Additionally, crisis counselors from KSPHQ will be at [insert name of school] throughout the day to provide support to any students in need.*

*We appreciate your care and concern as we navigate this loss together. Please know that resources are available for you and/or any of your loved ones who may be struggling at this time. We have attached additional information to this letter. Please reach out to us with any questions, needs, or concerns.*

*Kindly,*

[insert signature]

[attach Appendices F & L, and Calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: What to Expect]

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### **REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE**

#### **Voice Message to Families, End of Week 1:**

\*This script should be read as an Aptegey phone message to parents/guardians.

*Hello. This is [insert name], Principal at [insert school].*

*I want to acknowledge the immense difficulty of this week as our community continues to process and grieve the suicide-loss of a student. In the face of adversity, we have witnessed our students, our teachers and staff, and our parents and guardians display profound strength, resilience, and support. For this, we are extremely grateful.*

*It's important to us that we keep you informed on all the steps we are taking to support the safety and well-being of our students. We will continue to collaborate with KSPHQ for the remainder of the school year, and will communicate any support plans to you accordingly.*

*Funeral services for [insert student name] will take place on [insert date and time]. We want to remind you that students will be released to attend services only with parental permission, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services they attend. Additionally, crisis counselors from KSPHQ will be at [insert name of school] throughout the day to provide support to any students in need.*

*We appreciate your care and concern as we navigate this loss together. Please know that resources are available for you and/or any of your loved ones who may be struggling at this time. Please check your emails as we have sent along additional information in the form of attachments.*

*Thank you.*

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### **REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE**

#### **Written Correspondence to Families, Student Support Plan Update:**

\*This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email.

*Hello Parents and Guardians,*

*You are receiving this email because you have a child that attends [insert name of school] and has likely been impacted in some way by our recent suicide-loss. We want to provide an update regarding our plan to support students this week.*

*We honor that every person experiences grief differently, and we believe there is no “right way” to grieve any kind of loss. Because this particular loss was so recent, we feel it is important that all of our students have the option for continued support from Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ.*

*On [insert date], counselors from KSPHQ will be on site and available for any student or group of students who would like to talk. The counselors will hold space for students to discuss their thoughts and feelings, receive direct support, get questions answered, and learn about important resources.*

*In order to facilitate a day that is efficient and beneficial for your child, we would like for you to let us know if your student is interested in being a part of a group or meeting with a counselor on [insert day].*

*Additionally, it’s important to us that you are receiving opportunities for support as well. We invite you to join us on [insert date and time] for a parents/guardians meeting with counselors from Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ. This is a time to share your thoughts and feelings, ask any questions you may have about supporting your child, and learn about relevant resources.*

*We will continue working with KSPHQ to assess our school community’s needs moving forward and provide updates to you accordingly.*

*Please feel free to reach out with any questions.*

*Take care,*

[insert signature]

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### **REGARDING AN OFFICIAL SUICIDE**

#### **Voice Message to Families, Student Support Plan Update:**

\*This script should be read as an Aptegey phone message to parents/guardians.

*Hello. This is [insert name], Principal at [insert school].*

*You are receiving this message because you have a child that has likely been impacted in some way by our recent suicide-loss. We want to provide an update regarding our plan to support students this week.*

*We honor that every person experiences grief differently, and we believe there is no “right way” to grieve any kind of loss. Because this particular loss was so recent, we feel it is important that all of our students have the option for continued support from Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ.*

*On [insert date], counselors from KSPHQ will be on site and available for any student or group of students who would like to talk. The counselors will hold space for students to discuss their thoughts and feelings, receive direct support, get questions answered, and learn about important resources.*

*In order to facilitate a day that is efficient and beneficial for your child, we would like for you to let us know if your student is interested in being a part of a group or meeting with a counselor on [insert day].*

*Additionally, it's important to us that you are receiving opportunities for support as well. We invite you to join us on [insert date and time] for a parents/guardians meeting with counselors from Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ. This is a time to share your thoughts and feelings, ask any questions you may have about supporting your child, and learn about relative resources.*

*We will continue working with KSPHQ to assess our school community's needs moving forward and provide updates to you accordingly.*

*Please feel free to reach out with any questions. Thank you and take care.*

## APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

### REGARDING A SUSPICIOUS DEATH NOT DECLARED A SUICIDE

#### **Written Correspondence to Families, Day 1:**

\*This letter and essential resources should be sent home with students and sent out to parents/guardians via email.

*Dear Parents/Guardians,*

*I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our students passed away suddenly [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.*

*All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them. Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer. You will receive updates regarding our plans to continue supporting students as they are made.*

*Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission and pick up, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services.*

*I have attached a list of school and community resources as well as some tips for talking to your teen about grief and loss.*

*If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.*

*Take care,*

[insert signature]

[attach Appendix L and [Talking to Teens about Grief and Loss](#)]

## **APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)**

### **REGARDING A SUSPICIOUS DEATH NOT DECLARED A SUICIDE**

#### **Voice Message to Families, Day 1:**

\*This script should be read as an Aptegey phone message. Parents should be notified the same day as students, but not before students have been informed.

*Hello. This is [insert name], Principal at [insert school].*

*I am delivering this message with great sadness to inform you that one of our students died unexpectedly [insert timeline - last night/yesterday/early this morning]. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to [his/her/their] loved ones.*

*All of our students were notified of this loss by their teacher in [# hour]. I have sent all parents and guardians a letter which includes the script that was read to students along with valuable resources. This letter has been sent out via email and all students have paper copies to bring home. If you don't have access to this letter, please call us so that we can ensure you have all of the information we've been able to provide.*

*Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer. You will receive updates regarding our plans to continue supporting students as they are made.*

*Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission and pick up, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services.*

*Please reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.*

*Thank you and take care.*

## APPENDIX F

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Guidelines for Supporting Students After a Suicide Loss

Talking Points	What to Say
<p><b>Give accurate information about suicide.</b></p> <p>Suicide is a complicated behavior. Help students understand the complexities.</p>	<p>“Suicide is not caused by a single event such as fighting with parents, or a bad grade, or the breakup of a relationship.”</p> <p>“In most cases, suicide is caused by mental health disorders like depression or substance abuse problems. Mental health problems affect the way people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly and rationally. Struggling with your mental health is nothing to be ashamed of.”</p> <p>“There are effective treatments to help people who struggle with their mental health. Suicide is preventable.”</p>
<p><b>Address blaming and scapegoating.</b></p> <p>It is common to try to answer the question “why” by blaming others for the suicide.</p>	<p>“Blaming others for the suicide is wrong, and it’s not fair. Doing that can hurt the other person deeply.”</p> <p>“Suicide is a very personal decision made in a moment of crisis.”</p>
<p><b>Do not talk about the method.</b></p> <p>Talking about the method can create images that are upsetting or even traumatizing to individuals.</p> <p>It may also increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable youth.</p>	<p>“Let’s focus on talking about the feelings we are left with now and figure out the best way to manage them.”</p> <p>“It is normal to have questions about the details of what happened. Sometimes it seems like having more information could help us make sense of why this happened. What we know is that discussing the details can be really harmful, and ultimately having more information tends to leave us with more questions than we started with.”</p>

## APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

<p><b>Address anger.</b></p> <p>Accept expressions of anger at the deceased. Help students know these feelings are normal.</p>	<p>“It is okay 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 choices and still care deeply about that person.”</p> <p>“It’s important that we don’t lash out at anyone who is feeling angry. There is no ‘right way’ to feel right now.”</p>
<p><b>Normalize all feelings and responses.</b></p> <p>Explain to students that every person grieves differently.</p> <p>Encourage students to accept their own emotions about the event and to accept the emotions and reactions of their peers without judgement.</p>	<p>“Sometimes the feelings and reactions that we have to this kind of loss can feel surprising or unexpected, and that’s normal.”</p> <p>“We often think our feelings and reactions should ‘make sense’ but the truth is that we can’t make sense of a suicide-loss. We all grieve differently.”</p> <p>“There is no ‘right way’ to feel about this. There is no ‘correct’ reaction. Grief is messy.”</p>
<p><b>Address feelings of responsibility.</b></p> <p>Help students understand that the only person responsible for the suicide is the deceased.</p> <p>Reassure those who have exaggerated feelings of responsibility, such as thinking they should have done something to save the deceased or seen the signs.</p>	<p>“This death is not your fault. We cannot always see the signs because we may not know them all or because the suicidal person may hide them very well.”</p> <p>“We cannot always predict someone’s behavior.”</p>
<p><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>“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, depressed, or had thoughts of suicide?”</p>

## APPENDIX G

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Memorialization Policy for Student/Staff Deaths

This policy is intended to be used when considering memorialization for all deaths, including suicide deaths. Our school is committed to consulting with the family of the deceased in each case.

**Flags:** Flags will not be flown at half-staff. Only the President of the United States or a governor has the authority to order flags to be flown at half-staff.

**Memorials:** Spontaneous memorials (such as collections of objects and notes) are not encouraged and will be respectfully removed as soon as possible. A memorial can be an upsetting reminder of a loss and can romanticize the deceased in a way that increases risk for suicide imitation or contagion.

**Assemblies:** Large memorial assemblies will not be convened as the emotions generated at such a gathering can be difficult to control. Instead, students will have opportunities to process their emotions individually or in small groups with trained counselors.

**Graduations:** Students who have died will be acknowledged and remembered at graduation ceremonies, but will not be the focus of the event so as not to glorify the student's death or overwhelm attendees and/or graduates. Specifically, the deceased student will be named in the beginning of the graduation ceremony and the speaker will facilitate a moment of silence for those we've lost. Physical memorials at graduation ceremonies are not permitted. Graduating students who are deceased is not permitted.

**Funerals:** Funerals and other memorial services are not to be held on school grounds under any circumstances.

**Long-Term Memorials:** Permanent or long-term memorials for a deceased student shall not be permitted on school grounds.

#### **Guidelines for Appropriate Memorials**

- Involve students in the decision-making process and solicit ideas from them to memorialize the deceased in positive ways that do not put other students at risk or contribute to the emotional crisis that occurs after a death.
- Memorials should be temporary, non-renewable, or "living" (e.g. monetary donation to charity or research, purchase of a suicide prevention program for students, etc.).
- Memorials should celebrate the deceased student's life, not glorify their death.
- Consult with the family of the deceased before implementing any memorials.
- Examples of safe memorialization:
  - Invite students to write personal and lasting remembrances in a memory book located in the counseling office, which will ultimately be given to the family.
  - Encourage students to engage in service projects, such as organizing a community service day, sponsoring behavioral health awareness programs, or becoming involved in a peer support program.
  - Invite students to make donations to the library or to a scholarship fund in memory of the deceased.

## APPENDIX H

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Talking Points for Media Interactions

The staff person responsible for working with the media should prepare a written statement for release to those media representatives who request it. The statement should include:

- A very brief statement acknowledging the death of the student that does NOT include details about the death
- An expression of the school's sympathy to the survivors of the deceased
- Information about the school's postvention policy and program

#### Sample Statement:

*I am very sad to report that [insert name of school] has lost a student to suicide this week. On behalf of the entire school district, I want to express our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the student's family and friends for this painful loss. Our school is working with Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ to provide suicide postvention services and support to students, staff, and families this week and in the weeks to come.*

*During this time, we would like to remind the community that help is available. If you or anyone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or feelings, please reach out for assistance. Trained counselors are available 24/7 on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. You do not have to be suicidal to call this number. You can call for any reason, at any time.*

All other staff (including school board members) should:

- Refrain from making any comments to or responding to requests from the media
- Refer all requests from the media to the designated person responsible for working with the media

Media representatives should:

- **Not** be permitted to conduct interviews on the school grounds
- **Not** be allowed to attend parent and student group meetings in order to protect information shared by parents who are concerned about their children
- Be provided with a copy of "[Safe Reporting on Suicide: Key Points](#)" from the SPRC.

## APPENDIX I

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Guidelines for Monitoring Social Media

While we cannot control what other people say on social media, we can work in partnership with students to identify and monitor the relevant social media sites. By doing so, schools can strategically disseminate information, share prevention-oriented messaging, offer support to students who may be struggling, and identify and respond to students who could be at risk.

#### **When Someone is Placing Blame**

It is common for people to place blame as a way of trying to make sense of why this happened. Keep in mind that people who are engaging in this behavior are in a lot of pain, which means it's important to respond with compassion and offer support. Below is a general example of how you might respond:

- *We understand that this loss is incredibly painful, and that it feels like there should be an explanation for why this happened. However, we know that there is never just one cause for suicide and we want to make sure we are spreading accurate information about this topic. Please take a look at these resources for more information and remember that support is available to you at this time.*

#### **When Someone is At-Risk for Suicide**

There may be an uptick in suicide risk after a suicide loss. It's important to take all information about students being at-risk for suicide seriously, whether it is coming directly from a student asking for help, a student exhibiting warning signs, or a peer expressing concern for someone else. Be sure to alert the school mental health team so that they can follow up more thoroughly. Below is an example of how you might respond directly on social media:

- *Your safety and well-being is important to us. If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out for support. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or you can call Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ at 785-841-2345. These hotlines are available 24/7 for free and they are confidential. You do not have to be suicidal to call. You can call for any reason at any time.*

For more guidance regarding monitoring social media after a suicide, please review pages 32-36 of [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#).

## LONG TERM RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Steps to Take in the Long-Term Aftermath	Staff Responsible	Relevant Contacts (Phone Numbers)	TASK COMPLETED
1. Coordinate implementation of long-term response protocol  (Appendix J)	Lead:  Backup:	KSPHQ: 785-841-2345  Community Mental Health Center:	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
2. Monitor and assist vulnerable students	Lead:  Backup:	KSPHQ: 785-841-2345  Community Mental Health Center:	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
3. Prepare for anniversaries of the death  (Appendix K)	Lead:  Backup:		<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:
4. Prepare to provide support to siblings of the deceased who may be enrolling in your school	Lead: Freshman Counselor  Backup: Sophomore Counselor		<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed  Initials:  Date/Time:

## APPENDIX J

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Considerations for Long-Term Support

After the first week of crisis response, students will still need a significant amount of support available to them. To be thorough, the long-term support timeline begins the day of the funeral services for the deceased. These suggestions are general and will require adaptation throughout the postvention process.

#### **Day of Funeral Services:**

- Crisis counselors should be available at the school throughout the day of the funeral services in the event that some students aren't able to attend or show up to school before/after services.
- School mental health staff should be present at the funeral services for the deceased to support students and staff. They will write down names of people that may require follow-up or additional monitoring throughout the weeks to come.

#### **Addressing Parent Needs:**

- Hosting a parent meeting at the school that includes crisis counselors can help the parents feel supported and can increase trust between parents and the school. This is an opportunity for parents to safely express feelings and concerns, ask important questions, and learn about resources that are available to them.
- If at all possible, it is best to not include the family members of the deceased.

#### **Addressing Staff Needs:**

- At the end of the first and second weeks of postvention, invite all teachers and staff to a meeting after school where they can receive support from crisis counselors, ask questions, and debrief how things have been going in their classrooms.
- Check in with staff about whether or not they have noticed any particular students who are struggling. This can provide them a sense of relief knowing that these students are being followed-up with and taken care of.
- Ensure that teachers and staff know that there is support available to them at any point throughout the school year and for any reason.

#### **Addressing Student Needs:**

- Crisis counselors should be available consistently and frequently for the first two weeks after the event.
  - Inform students each time counselors are present - provide as much notice as possible and provide reminders the day of.
  - Students should be able to meet individually or in small groups as needed.
  - Consult with KSPHQ to respond to any unique needs that may arise.
- After the initial two weeks, the school mental health team will coordinate with KSPHQ to assess the current level of need and determine a plan for tapered support going forward.
- All interactions with students will be reported to the school mental health team to assist with monitoring specific at-risk students.

#### **Communicate the Support Plan**

- Ensure that students, staff, and parents are made aware of the plan for tapered support. Communicate any support plan updates accordingly. Setting expectations can bolster a sense of safety and security for the community.

## APPENDIX K

### Suicide Postvention Policy: Considerations for Anniversaries of Crisis Events

As part of the long-term postvention plan, it's important to consider and prepare for anniversaries and other activating occasions related to the death as these often bring up waves of grief and other big emotions for students and staff.

The administrative team will ensure that anniversary dates are represented on a private calendar so that adequate preparation can take place.

Consider preparing for the following:

- The birthday of the person who died
- Holidays and holiday breaks
- Athletic or other events in which the deceased would have participated
- The start of the school year
- Prom
- Graduation

Consider preparing for these events in the following ways:

- Alert staff to the upcoming anniversary or event that may be associated with the deceased
- Educate them that it's possible students and staff might experience emotional reactions and that is normal
- Provide staff with the [Talking to Teens About Grief and Loss](#) handout
- Encourage staff to review Jason Flatt training materials regarding recognizing warning signs for suicide and responding appropriately to students who may be at risk or experience severe emotions
- Have grief counselors or mental health professionals on call

## **APPENDIX L**

### **Suicide Postvention Policy: School and Community Resources List**

#### **School Resources:**

School Social Worker  
(000) 000-0000

School Counselor  
(000) 000-0000

School Psychologist  
(000) 000-0000

WRAP Therapist  
(000) 000-0000

#### **Community Resources:**

Community Mental Health Center  
(000) 000-0000  
Address

Kansas Suicide Prevention HQ  
(785) 841- 2345 -Available 24/7, free and confidential  
2110 Delaware Street, Suite B  
Lawrence, KS 66046

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-8255 -Available 24/7, free and confidential

Crisis Text Line  
Text KANSAS to 741-741

**APPENDIX M**

Suicide Postvention Policy:  
Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Template

<b>STEP 1.</b> Thoughts, feelings, situations, or behaviors that indicate a crisis may be developing:
<b>STEP 2.</b> Activities that soothe me or provide distraction that I can do alone:
<b>STEP 3.</b> People and social settings that provide distraction (include contact information):
<b>STEP 4.</b> People whom I can ask for help (include contact information):
<b>STEP 5.</b> Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis (include contact information):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255</li><li>• Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741</li></ul>
<b>STEP 6.</b> Ways to make my environment safe and calm:

**The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:**

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## APPENDIX N

### Suicide Postvention Policy: List of Supporting Documents and Resources

The following list of documents and resources are referenced but not included as handouts in this Suicide Response Plan. It is up to the Suicide Response Team to maintain access to and update these resources as needed.

- Calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: What to Expect
  - Kansas Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- [Talking to Teens about Grief and Loss](#)
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- [Supporting Children After Suicide Loss](#)
  - Child Mind Institute
- [10 Ways to Support a Loved One Who Has Lost Someone to Suicide](#)
  - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- [Safe Reporting on Suicide: Key Points](#)
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools](#)
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- [Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration