

Suicide Postvention for School-based Staff in Charge of Transportation

The personnel involved in the transporting of students are often overlooked in the postvention outreach process. Not only are they often personally affected by the death because of their informal and close relationships with the students, but also they may be in the unique position of being exposed to gossip and rumors and can be excellent resources in the identification of potentially vulnerable youth.

Here's an outline of information to share with transportation personnel. This can be sent via e-mail or written in a document that is distributed to bus drivers as they arrive at the school on day 1.

- Review what happened in a brief, succinct manner. This can be similar to initial information communicated to school faculty and staff.
- Recognize that some of the personnel may have known the deceased student personally and acknowledge their loss and grief.
- Remind them that the school has a plan in place to maintain control, structure, and direction as well as to provide support to all members of the school community.
- Emphasize the importance of identifying students who may be particularly affected by the death. These may include close friends, relatives, neighbors, or teammates of the deceased as well as other vulnerable students who seem emotionally upset by the death. Students who have either talked about suicide in the past or made previous attempts may also be at increased risk because of this death. Ask for the help of support personnel in identifying these students and referring them to a specific person on the crisis team. Provide contact information.
- Acknowledge that the death may be surrounded with gossip and rumors. Because of their unique role in students' lives, they may have access to some of this information. Identify the crisis team member to whom rumors, however trivial, can be communicated.
- Inform them that the school has one staff person assigned to respond to all media requests. Ask for their cooperation in respecting both the school's and the family's privacy by not making comments to media representatives, even off the record.
- Encourage them to take care of themselves. Even if they are not personally affected by this death, feelings of grief over other personal losses can be reopened by a current, unrelated death. Provide them with community resources.
- Include the name of the crisis team member(s) they can contact for more information.