

TRAGIC OCCURRENCE PROCEDURE

Background

To ensure that schools are acknowledged as they may become profoundly affected when a tragic death occurs to a student or staff member. To ensure that a concrete plan of action is in place to support students and staff impacted by the loss and offset the initial shock reaction. The primary guiding principle is to return to regular routines within the school as soon as possible.

Procedures

1. Upon receiving information that a student or staff member has passed away, contact the Superintendent or designate. The Superintendent will then contact the Director of Student Services to arrange for support from Mental Health Workers and external consultants/support if needed.
2. The principal or designate should contact an immediate family member of the deceased to express sympathy on behalf of the school, determine what details the family would like to share and ask for permission to release the information to school and Division staff, students and the parent community.
3. Administrative staff should meet with Division Office support personnel (Superintendent or designate, Director of Student Services, School Mental Health worker) to plan and implement a course of action for working with students and parents.
4. The Principal will arrange a staff meeting that should be held as soon as possible so the facts of the situation are reviewed to establish a common reference base, dispel rumours and communicate the next steps.
5. Review the characteristics of high-risk students with the staff. Request that staff compile a list based on observations of individual student reactions that may need follow-up. These students should be directed to the crisis center for counseling. When appropriate, parents will be contacted.
6. The Principal will arrange for a space/location in the school for students to gather and receive counseling support or take time to grieve.
7. The Principal, teacher, counselors, or Division Office staff may meet with each grade, either by individual homerooms or grade level groups in order to:
 - 7.1 Review the known facts and to dispel rumours,
 - 7.2 De-mythologize the act,

- 7.3 Inform them of the location in the school where they can go to receive support or grieve,
 - 7.4 Encourage them to express feelings in whatever way is appropriate for them,
 - 7.5 Discuss possible feelings of guilt or feelings of responsibility,
 - 7.6 Ask them to be supportive of one another and to escort any friend who is upset to a teacher or to the location identified in the school where support is available,
 - 7.7 Reassure them that any adult in the building is available to help,
 - 7.8 Encourage them to discuss their feelings with their parents and,
 - 7.9 Apprise them of the signs and symptoms of depression to watch for in the next few days.
- 8. Requests for information regarding the death by outside agencies should be directed to the Principal or designated person.
 - 9. School administration and the Director of Student Services will develop a memorial action plan to support student displays of grief.
 - 10. It is not recommended that funerals or memorial services for students be held at their own schools. If a principal receives a request to hold a funeral at the school, they are to work with Division Office staff to find a solution.
 - 11. The following are recommended courses of action when a suicide has or is believed to have occurred:
 - 11.1 The Principal or designate contacts the Superintendent, Designate, and Director of Students Services for appraisal and support. Division Personnel and Mental Health workers will, in consultation with the Principal, determine the support services needed and these will be made available.
 - 12. Schools may wish to offer assistance to parents and other members of the school community by referring them to appropriate community agencies.

Reference: Section 33, 52, 53, 68,196, 204, 222, 225 Education Act