

# Crisis Team Response to a Completed Suicide

School Resources to Support Military-Connected Students is a project by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness an applied research center at The Pennsylvania State University and is funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity Grant number HE1254-19-0009.

For more information click on the links below:

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://www.psu.edu/>

<https://dodeagrants.org/>

Our goal is to provide school personnel with free, evidence-based resources to support military-connected students. This training is part of our *Suicide Prevention* series.

## Important Reminders

Before starting this training, please read the items below carefully and check the box in front of each item to indicate your understanding.

- The following content discusses suicide and may be upsetting to some individuals.
- Follow all district, local, state, and federal regulations. This training is **NOT** intended to replace or override existing procedures or laws.

## Introduction

### What is the purpose of this training?

In order to best serve students, families, and community stakeholders during a crisis, it is critical to understand one's role. Confusion regarding roles can lead to unnecessary problems in an already complex situation.

### Objective

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

**Identify the responsibilities of school crisis team members after a student suicide.**

*How confident are you in your ability to do this now?*

Please click on the link below to submit your response.

[https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6Gp3iBHlvhcTluR?modulenumber=suicide30](https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Gp3iBHlvhcTluR?modulenumber=suicide30)

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below before proceeding with this training.

Answered the survey question in the link.

Clicked the arrow underneath the survey question to submit your response.

Recorded the ID number provided after you submitted your answer to the survey question. You will need it to complete the survey at the end of this training.

## Research

### What is most important for me to know?

Schools often struggle in the wake of a crisis. To prevent unnecessary suffering, misinformation, or panic, it is imperative that a well-organized crisis team be formed and maintained BEFORE a crisis. More information about essential crisis management processes can be reviewed by clicking the button below to visit the training titled Crisis Management Processes.

#### ***Go to Crisis Management Processes***

Click on the link below to visit the training titled *Crisis Management Processes*. The objective of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to assist your school's crisis management team in auditing an existing crisis management plan or developing a written crisis management plan to guide school staff in responding to a critical incident or crisis event.

[https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide\\_03-crisis-management-processes\\_201022/](https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_03-crisis-management-processes_201022/)

Below you will find the recommended responsibilities of crisis team members in the aftermath of a student suicide,

#### **Crisis Management Team Leader – Administrator**

- Verify crisis – Notify administrators and district supervisor if appropriate
- Inform teachers and staff that the School Resource Officer is the school's media contact
- Assemble Crisis Management Team
- Notify Media Liaison
- Write announcement with input from Team
- Designate Family Liaison
- Inform parents of plan for notifying students, faculty, and staff
- Schedule emergency staff meeting
- Establish Crisis Room
- Write condolence letter to family (if necessary)
- Grant staff release time to attend funeral (if necessary)
- Maintain high visibility during crisis
- Debrief with the crisis team for support and long-term planning

Some tasks could be delegated to a Crisis Event Facilitator who would be selected by, and serve as a representative of, an administrator to make day-to-day decisions for a specific crisis situation. The designated Crisis Event Facilitator would be expected to turn to the administrator when needed, including when the allocation of resources is being considered.

Remind teachers and staff not to communicate with the media but to refer them to your identified media liaison for your district.

#### **Crisis Event Facilitator**

- Oversee day-to-day management of crisis response to and with the student body, school personnel, and community members
- Communicate between the Crisis Team and the administrator
- Provide school/community communication
- Check in with administrator when a decision requires a higher level of approval

#### **School Psychologist/Counselors**

- Provide classroom assistance
- Staff the Crisis Room – talk with affected students about the crisis Contact community support services
- Provide grief information – support students and staff Encourage students and staff to express their feelings
- Contact parents as needed – provide referrals to community agencies

## **Nurse/Medical Personnel**

- Assist with communications with medical treatment facility
- Clarify and verify information
- Provide medical information and emergency care as needed

## **Roamers**

- Keep media out of the school
- Be available to speak with classes about how to respond to others after a crisis

## **Public Affairs/Media Liaison**

- Inform teachers and staff that the School Resource Officer is the school's media contact
- The Media Liaison is the school's one and only contact person and all inquiries are referred to the Media Liaison
- The Media Liaison is the spokesperson for the school – the person who knows what information is allowed to be given to the media and what is sensitive to public knowledge

# **Application**

## **How might this look in my professional practice?**

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

## **Identify the responsibilities of school crisis team members after a student suicide.**

In the activity below, identify the crisis team member responsible for each action.

1. Encourage students and staff to express their feelings.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: c) School Psychologist/Counselors

2. Assemble Crisis Management Team.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: a) Crisis Management Team Leader

3. Contact community support services.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: c) School Psychologist/Counselor

4. Assist with communications with medical treatment facility.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

5. Communicate between the Crisis Team and the administrator.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: b) Crisis Event Facilitator

6. Oversee day-to-day management of crisis response to and with the student body.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: b) Crisis Event Facilitator

7. Provide medical information and emergency care as needed.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

8. Designate Family Liaison.

- a) Crisis Management Team Leader
- b) Crisis Event Facilitator
- c) School Psychologist/Counselors
- d) Nurse/Medical Personnel

Correct Answer: a) Crisis Management Team Leader

9. The spokesperson for the school.

- a) Roamers
- b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

Correct Answer: b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

10. Keep media out of the school.

- a) Roamers
- b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

Correct Answer: a) Roamers

11. Be available to speak with classes about how to respond to others after crisis.

- a) Roamers
- b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

Correct Answer: a) Roamers

12. The school's one and only contact.

- a) Roamers
- b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

Correct Answer: b) Public Affairs/Media Liaison

## Implementation

### How can I effectively implement this content in my professional practice?

Please review the considerations below regarding potential implementation strategies, barriers to implementation, and collaboration strategies related to this content. This will help you coordinate the next steps as you begin to incorporate the information presented in this training into your professional practice.

**This information can also be found on a handout that you will be able to download at the end of this training.**

## Implementation Strategies

- Crisis team members should be selected and trained regularly.
- Crisis team members should meet at least quarterly to review procedures, examine ways to improve, and discuss any concerns. The crisis team should also debrief after a crisis to determine if changes to protocol may be helpful.
- Cross-train crisis team members for maximum redundancy in the event of a crisis if a person is on leave, resigns from the district, or is otherwise unable to carry out their responsibilities.

## Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- Regular visibility of the crisis team and their efforts should be shared at faculty and staff meetings by providing updates and reviewing procedures. Knowing the who, what, when, where, and why of the crisis team is important for collaboration and coordination in the event of a suicide.

## Collaboration Strategies

- All school personnel should have familiarity with crisis team procedures and know who is the primary point of contact in the event that they are the first person to become aware of a student death by suicide.
- Regular consultation and meetings with community stakeholders and support persons such as clergy, law enforcement, and mental health professionals are important ways to build capacity for additional assistance when needed in the event of a student death by suicide.

## Resources

### Are there any resources available to help me implement this content?

Click on the link below to download a tool that you can use to implement this content in your professional practice.

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:357b6bb5-c315-401c-bbc6-48f89af2accb>

Below you can find other supplemental materials that may be helpful for you in your professional practice.

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/6f351b1d-5ae1-4308-855c-eacec363cfc2/downloads/08%20Checklist%20of%20Crisis%20Team%20Tasks.pdf?ver=1600961345541>

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/6f351b1d-5ae1-4308-855c-eacec363cfc2/downloads/08%20Safe%20Room%20Sign-In%20Sheet.pdf?ver=1600961345541>

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/6f351b1d-5ae1-4308-855c-eacec363cfc2/downloads/08%20Parent%20Letter%20-Suicide%20Loss.docx?ver=1600961345541>

## Feedback

### How can I help improve this training?

The objective of this training was to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify the responsibilities of school crisis team members after a student suicide.

Answer the questions in the link below to let us know how well this training increased your confidence in your ability to accomplish this objective. Once you have answered all of the questions, click the blue arrow button underneath to submit your responses.

[https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_d771mLr9ZgW3kyx?modulenumber=suicide30](https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d771mLr9ZgW3kyx?modulenumber=suicide30)

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below.

Answered all of the survey questions above. You may have to scroll to see all of the questions.  
Clicked the arrow underneath the last survey question to submit your responses.

## Additional Readings

### Where can I learn more about this content?

The following resources were used to create this training. If you would like more information about the information presented in this training, we encourage you to start here.

Erbacher, T. A., Singer, J. B., & Poland, S. (2015). School-based practice in action. Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention, and postvention. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

## Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this training. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at [schoolresources@psu.edu](mailto:schoolresources@psu.edu).

### Proceed to the next training

Click on the link below to move on to the next training titled *Student Grief Processes*. In this training, you will increase your confidence in your ability to recognize age-appropriate grief reactions in your students.

[https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide\\_31-student-grief-processes\\_201022/](https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_31-student-grief-processes_201022/)

### Return to the module directory

Click on this button to return to the module directory.

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/modules/>