

Students that Require Extensive Support After a Student Suicide (Tier III Response)

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.

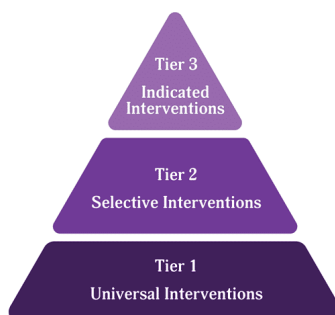
- The following content discusses suicide and may be upsetting to some individuals.
- Follow all district, local, state, and federal regulations. This training is **NOT** intended to replace or override existing procedures or laws.

Introduction

What is the purpose of this training?

Postvention efforts can be conceptualized in a multi-tiered systems of service (MTSS) framework (Erbacher, Singer, & Poland, 2015). While the MTSS perspective is most commonly employed as a method for improving instruction and academic results for students, it can also be effective in a crisis response situation. MTSS provides a framework for addressing all levels of need for students and staff, so that appropriate care can be provided for the entire school community.

See below for an overview of the three-tier model. This training will review best practices for tier III postvention after a student suicide.



Level of Service:

Tier 1

Target Population:

School Community

Suggested Procedures and Interventions:

1. Death announcement read in faculty/staff meeting and in class
2. Provide an opportunity to ask questions/dispel rumors/learn about funeral arrangements.
3. Psychoeducation about suicide and how to get help.
4. May include parent/community education meetings.

Level of Service:

Tier 2

Target Population:

Those in Need of Additional Support

Suggested Procedures and Interventions:

1. Small group or individual support from counselors.
2. Not therapy, but rather normalization of emotions and reactions.

Level of Service:

Tier 3

Target Population:

Those at Higher Risk

Suggested Procedures and Interventions:

1. Referrals for individual therapy support.
2. For students, possible coordination with parents.

Objective

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

Identify and support students that may need additional help at the Tier III level 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=suicide36

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?

Often, it is assumed that we should refer all Tier III interventions for suicide deaths to community and other outside service providers. It is not unusual for school psychologists and counselors—who are already overburdened with other responsibilities—to think that community mental health practitioners are better suited to provide one-on-one therapy or small group interventions after a suicide. School mental health professionals, however, are all too aware that, in many instances, appropriate external resources are unavailable or non-existent. Therefore, since school mental health professionals—like school psychologists and counselors—are sometimes the only line of support, Tier III interventions may need to be administered entirely in the school setting, or in conjunction with support provided by medical treatment. However, it is important to note that these school-based services should not be seen as a substitute for medical treatment and attempts to access appropriate medical treatment should continue.

Small Group Supports

While the empirical base for post-suicide specific interventions for children are limited, there is reason to be hopeful. In a recent study, the group therapy model, entitled Program for Children Bereaved by Suicide (PCBS) for 6- to 12-year-old children, has been found to decrease anxiety, depression, and other symptoms (Daigle & Labelle, 2012). In addition, suicide-specific support groups have been studied qualitatively, and students report that participation in groups of this type helped them to feel less isolated and better supported, and helped them normalize their experiences after a suicide (Groos & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013).

While these programs may be beyond your current level of expertise, in order to feel more confident about providing appropriate support when external resources are unavailable, you may want to consider additional training and professional development in these methods. Some training resources to consider include:

[American Academy of Grief Counseling at AIHCP](#)

[Home | AFSP](#)

Individual Therapeutic Supports

For children and youth who are experiencing symptoms related to traumatic stress (whether or not they meet full criteria for an identification of post-traumatic stress disorder), individual trauma-focused therapies may be indicated. There are several empirically supported therapy models for trauma in children and youth that can be helpful, including prolonged-exposure therapy, cognitive-processing therapy, stress-inoculation training, and even cognitive behavior therapy. Although you may not currently be prepared to offer trauma-focused therapies on an individual basis at your school, and it may be challenging to find practitioners in your community or at your school that could provide such individual level supports, you can expand your capabilities with short courses in cognitive behavior therapy, journaling and writing exercises, and other techniques that may be helpful in the absence of other therapies. For students experiencing complicated grief reactions, grief-focused therapies or cognitive behavior therapy may be helpful.

Although some of these trainings may be referred to as therapy, they are provided as sources for finding short-term, evidence-based mental health interventions that can be delivered within the school setting.

Click on the links below for more information:

[Home | Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavior Therapy](#)

[TFCBT-Web \(muscedu\)](#)

[A Therapist's Guide to Brief CBT | South Central MIRECC - MIRECC / CoE \(va.gov\)](#)

[Slide 1 \(schoolcounselor.org\)](#)

[About Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy \(TF-CBT\) - Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#)

[Catalog Home - National Association of School Psychologists \(inreachce.com\)](#)

Application

How might this look in my professional practice?

The objective of this training is to:

Identify and support students that may need additional help at the tier III level after a student suicide.

Based on your review of the trainings shared above, which of the following do you feel meet the unique needs of your school? Considerations may include current needs of your school, qualifications of practitioners, training needs of school personnel, availability of community supports, cost, time required, etc.

The American Academy of Grief Counseling
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavior Therapy
TF-CBT Web 2.0

A Therapist's Guide to Brief Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
Brief Solution-Focused Counseling in Schools: Core Skills and Strategies
Helping Youth Recover From Trauma: Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches
Advanced Mindfulness and Acceptance Practice in the Schools
Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems (MATCH-ADTC)

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

- Selection of trauma-informed or grief-related care can be complex. It is important that your school selects strategies that can be reasonably implemented. Grief-focused therapy options may be more feasible because students may routinely experience grief for a variety of losses, not just deaths by suicide.
- Ongoing training for cognitive behavior therapy techniques that are brief and manualized may be helpful for a variety of student needs and prepare your team for dealing with a death from suicide.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- All members of the school faculty, administration, and staff should be aware of procedures for signs of grief, traumatic stress, depression or other effects that may result from a death by suicide. Lack of training and awareness may result in unintended, yet harmful, consequences.
- All members of the school faculty should be aware of the procedures for referring students in need both in the immediate and longer-term aftermath of a death by suicide.

Collaboration Strategies

- Provide avenues for discussion and consultation for all school personnel so that they can get assistance when faced with students at increased risk.
- Always continue to build relationships with community providers in order to facilitate referrals when needed.

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:ca198aa0-d589-45a1-ae52-aa30b2cd2592>

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

[Continuum of Evidence | Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness | A Penn State Applied Research Center \(psu.edu\)](#)

[Program Implementation Toolkit - Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness \(psu.edu\)](#)

Feedback

How can I help improve this training?

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

Identify and support students that may need additional help at the tier III level 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=suicide36

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, Terri & Singer, Jonathan & Poland, Scott. (2015). Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention, and postvention.

Daigle, M. S., & Labelle, R. J. (2012). Pilot evaluation of a group therapy program for children bereaved by suicide. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 33(6), 350–357.

<https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000147>

Groos, A. D., & Shakespeare-Finch, J. (2013). Positive experiences for participants in suicide bereavement groups: a grounded theory model. *Death studies*, 37(1), 1– 24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2012.687898>

Lehman, D. H., LCSW, & Cozza, S. J., MD. (n.d.). The Families and Children of Fallen Military Service Members. Retrieved from https://ke.army.mil/bordeninstitute/published_volumes/combat_operational/CB M-ch33-final.pdf

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.

Proceed to the next training

Click on the link below to move on to the next training titled *Memorials, Anniversaries, and the New Normal*. In this training, you will increase your confidence in your ability to identify and implement best practices related to memorialization in the aftermath of a student suicide.

https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_37-memorials-anniversaries-and-the-new-normal_201022/

Return to the module directory

Click on this button to return to the module directory.

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