

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 196  
Rosemount, Minnesota  
*Educating our students to reach their full potential*

Series Number 506.5AR Adopted November 1992 Revised November 2002

Title School Response to the Death of a Student or Employee

1. **If a student or school employee dies, school officials will take the following actions:**
  - 1.1 The principal will notify school employees, the principal's supervisor, the superintendent and other appropriate people (students' parents, site council, etc.) of the death; give teachers a brief written, factual statement of what occurred to share with their students, and share information about memorial and/or funeral services as soon as it is available. (The superintendent will also issue a brief, factual statement to other district schools and departments to inform them of the situation.)
  - 1.2 The school crisis team (homeroom teacher, school psychologist, school nurse, school counselor [if any] and principal) will determine whether there is a need to bring in professional help from other schools or agencies (psychologists, counselors, etc.).
  - 1.3 If it appears students have a need to talk about the situation, a plan will be developed to respond to that need. If any students show a need for individual attention, teachers may request help from the school psychologist, school nurse and/or school counselor.
  - 1.4 The school psychologist, school nurse and/or school counselor(s) and/or employee assistance program will provide support for teachers and other school personnel, as needed.
  - 1.5 The principal may send a brief note to parents in the student's or employee's class, grade level or school (whichever the principal deems appropriate) to explain the death. It is suggested that the letter include information on memorial and/or funeral services, the name of a contact person at school (school psychologist, school nurse and/or school counselor) and available resources. If needed, the principal may also schedule a special meeting at school with appropriate resource people for parents and/or teachers who need support in responding to children's needs.
  - 1.6 Questions from parents, reporters, lawyers, doctors, etc., will be referred to the principal. (Refer to Administrative Regulation 505.2AR, Protection and Privacy of Student Records, for specific information.)

- 1.7 A school will not usually be closed for a funeral. If the funeral takes place during a school day, the principal, after consulting with appropriate staff, will decide which staff members may attend.
- 1.8 If the cause of a student's death is suicide, the school administration will also take the following actions:
  - 1.8.1 The school crisis team (homeroom teacher, school psychologist, school nurse, school counselor [if any] and principal[s]) will meet to develop a plan for the school day. If information about a suicide is received from someone other than a family member, a team member will verify the suicide. To help prevent a "copy-cat" suicide, the school crisis team will review the attendance list to check for names of close friends of the deceased student.
  - 1.8.2 The principal will notify his or her supervisor, the superintendent and other district principals about the suicide.
  - 1.8.3 The school crisis team will meet at the end of the day to review the day, discuss students who need further follow-up, determine if there is a need for outside agency help and plan for the next day.
  - 1.8.4 The principal will make sure that appropriate follow-up steps are taken, which may include:
    - 1.8.4.1 The school psychologist offering groups for students who request ongoing support;
    - 1.8.4.2 The principal offering an inservice meeting for staff to provide information about the warning signs of depression or suicidal behavior and referral procedures, and/or
    - 1.8.4.3 The principal encouraging staff to maintain a normal routine and normal student expectations during the crisis period.
- 1.9 If a teacher dies, the principal will also make sure that a school psychologist, school nurse, teacher, school counselor or administrator attends all of the deceased teacher's classes to acknowledge the death, tell students what happened and deal with students' expressions of feelings.
- 1.10 If a student or teacher dies during a vacation period, the principal or designee shall take appropriate action, based on this regulation and the specific circumstances.

2. **If an immediate family member of a student or school employee dies, school officials will take the following actions:**
  - 2.1 The principal will announce the death to other school employees and let them know about memorial service and/or funeral arrangements.
  - 2.2 The principal will decide when it is appropriate for school staff members to attend memorial and/or funeral services.
  - 2.3 The school psychologist, school nurse and/or school counselor will be made available to the student, the student's friends and staff, as needed.
  
3. **Memorials** - Appropriate ways of memorializing the deceased student or employee through donations may be considered. This should be implemented only after consulting with the principal's supervisor, the principal and the family. For individuals interested in donating money on behalf of the deceased, the family will be requested to identify those charities and/or organizations to which donations may be sent.