



# **Zavalla ISD**

## **Suicide Prevention Operating Procedures**

---

Superintendent, Dr. Zach Crawford

REVIEWED BY THE Zavalla ISD  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
June 20, 2022

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| RESPONSIBILITIES.....   | 2  |
| SUICIDE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM.....                                     | 2  |
| BACKGROUND .....  | 2  |
| WARNING SIGNS.....  | 3  |
| PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT .....  | 3  |
| TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY .....                    | 4  |
| PREVENTION: SUICIDAL IDEATION AND THREATS .....                         | 4  |
| SUICIDE INTERVENTION PROTOCOL CHART FOR CAMPUSES .....                  | 5  |
| COLUMBIA SUICIDE SEVERITY RATING SCALE (CSSR).....                      | 6  |
| STUDENT RISK NOTICE AND PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM.....                | 7  |
| PARENT ASSESSMENT REFUSAL FORM .....                                    | 9  |
| STUDENT SUICIDE RISK REPORT .....                                       | 10 |
| SCHOOL RE-ENTRY.....  | 12 |
| POSTVENTION AFTER A SUICIDE.....  | 13 |
| SUICIDE POSTVENTION PROTOCOL CHART .....                                | 15 |
| SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF AFTER A DEATH ..... | 16 |
| SAMPLE LETTER TO STAFF.....   | 18 |
| SAMPLE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS.....                                    | 19 |
| RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA.....  | 23 |
| AGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS .....  | 24 |
| NOTICE AND CONSENT TO RELEASE/REQUEST CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION .....    | 25 |
| VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF CARE PLAN .....                              | 26 |
| RESOURCES.....  | 27 |

## RESPONSIBILITIES

| Form   | Action   | Page | Responsible Staff       |
|--|--|------|-------------------------|
| Columbia Suicide Severity Scale                            | Give a copy to parents   | 5    | Counselor               |
| Student Risk Notice & Parent Acknowledgement Form          | Copy and give to parent w/CSSC,  | 7    | Counselor, Principal/AP |
| Parent Assessment Refusal Form                             | Have parent sign if they decline to take student for a professional assessment   | 9    | Counselor, Principal/AP |
| Student Suicide Risk Report                                | Keep in student file   | 10   | Counselor               |
| Notice and Consent for Release of Confidential Information | Obtain medical records when needed   | 26   | Counselor, Principal/AP |
| Verification of Receipt of Care Plan                       | Distribute Care Plan to personnel "with a right to know," obtain their signature | 27   | Counselor, Principal/AP |

## SUICIDE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Suicide Crisis Management Team will consist of three required members: The Campus Principal or Assistant Principal, the Counselor and the school Outcry person. The team may consist of others as determined the Campus Administrator.

## BACKGROUND

Zavalla ISD recognizes that depression and self-destruction are problems of increasing severity among children and adolescents. Zavalla ISD directs all school personnel to be alert to the student who exhibits signs of unusual depression or who threatens or attempts suicide. Any such signs or the report of such signs from another student or staff member should be taken with the utmost seriousness.

Suicide is a rare event. While many think about it, far less than 1% of the population kill themselves. This information is important and reassuring because it provides us with a measure of hope. If we can learn to recognize the warning signs, and gain confidence in our ability to intervene with suicidal youth, we may be able to prevent many youth suicides.

### Suicidal People Share Some Special Characteristics:

- A suicidal person sees suicide as the "solution" to his or her problems.
- Efforts to discuss alternative solutions are very worthwhile.
- A suicidal person is in crisis. Suicidal people are experiencing severe psychological distress. They need help in handling the crisis.
- Almost all suicidal people are ambivalent, they wish to live, AND they wish to die. We MUST support the side that wants to live and acknowledge the part that wants to die. Talking about these mixed feelings lowers anxiety. Listening and caring may save a life.
- Suicidal thinking is frequently irrational. Depression, anxiety, psychosis, drugs, or alcohol often distorts the thought process of people when they are feeling suicidal.
- Suicidal behavior is an attempt to communicate. It is a desperate reaction to overwhelming circumstances. We need to pay attention!

## WARNING SIGNS

Listen and look for these warning signs for suicidal behavior. Warning signs are the earliest detectable signs that indicate heightened risk for suicide *in the near-term* (i.e., within minutes, hours, or days), as opposed to risk factors which suggest longer-term risk (i.e., a year to a lifetime). NOTE that aside from direct statements or behaviors threatening suicide, it is often a group of signs that raises concern, rather than one or two symptoms alone. These are presented in a hierarchical manner and organized by degree of risk.

- Someone makes a threat to kill themselves
  - I wish I were dead
  - If such and such doesn't happen, I'll kill myself
  - What's the point of living
- Someone is looking for a way to carry out a suicide plan
  - They are looking for a gun, pills or other ways to kill themselves
  - They have a plan about where they can get these things
- Someone is talking or writing about death or suicide
  - In text messages
  - On social networking sites
  - In poems, music
- Signs of Depression
  - Mood—sad, irritable, angry
  - Withdrawing from friends, family, activities
  - Significant change in sleep, appetite or weight
  - Hopelessness—sees no chance of improvement
  - Feeling worthless or excessively guilty
  - Unable to think or concentrate
  - Anxiety: Restlessness, agitation, pacing
  - Feeling like a burden, people would be better off if I were dead
  - Alcohol or drug use is increased or excessive
  - Feeling trapped with no way out of the situation
  - Neglecting appearance
  - Drop in grades or increased absences

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents and families play a key role in youth suicide prevention, and Zavalla ISD seeks to involve parents and family members in suicide prevention efforts as key stakeholders. Parents and guardians will be informed and actively involved in decisions regarding their child's welfare, especially if the student presents a danger to himself/herself or others. Parents and guardians who learn the warning signs and risk factors for suicide are better equipped to connect their children with professional help when necessary. Parents and family members are advised to take every statement regarding suicide and wish to die seriously and avoid assuming that a child is simply seeking attention. For additional information on warning signs, crisis resources, and who to contact for assistance, please consult the Zavalla ISD campus administrators or counselors.

## TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

All Zavalla ISD school personnel including administrators, teachers, maintenance, food service, coaches, bus drivers, secretaries, aides, and other support staff will receive staff development on suicide prevention awareness. This training will be on an annual basis, as part of a new employee orientation and at least once every five years to existing school district educators.

This training may be in the following areas:

- Suicide related warning signs and risk factors
- A basic 3-step intervention to help suicidal youth
- Accurate and current information about school, community, and state resources for help
- Self-care guidelines for staff that work with a suicidal youth; an understanding of the school suicide prevention protocols

Suicide prevention education for students will be offered. Suicide prevention education for students includes:

- The relationship between drug and alcohol use and suicide
- Recognizing signs of suicidal tendencies and other warning signs of suicide
- Help seeking behaviors and available community suicide prevention services.

Suicide prevention information and resource materials will be available for parents and guardians at the campuses.

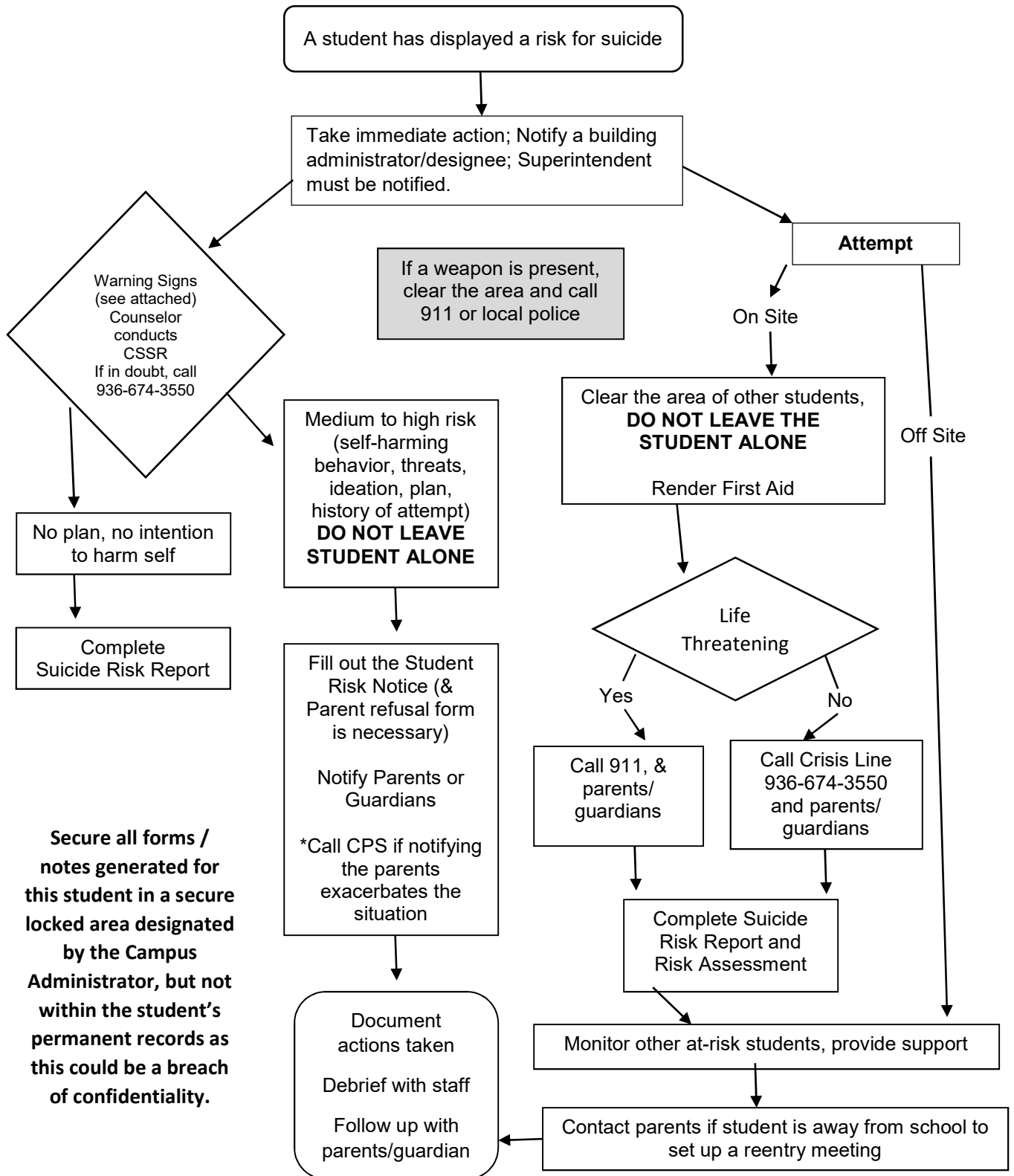
## PREVENTION: SUICIDAL IDEATION AND THREATS

The following are procedures for dealing with students who express a desire to harm themselves. When the risk of suicide exists, the situation must be managed by the designated staff. Under no circumstances should an untrained person attempt to assess the severity of suicidal risk. All assessment of threats, attempts or other risk factors must be left to the appropriate professionals (i.e. counselors, social workers, mental health therapists, resource coordinators, building administrators, school nurse).

In cases of suicidal risk, the campus should maintain a confidential record of actions taken. This will help assure that appropriate assessment, monitoring, and support are provided as well as document the school's efforts to intervene and protect the student. The following form template may be used for this purpose and then signed by appropriate staff members. It is recommended that the forms be readily available for reference/documentation.

After the completion of the risk assessment, campus personnel will contact the guardian/parents of the students. In addition, the Angelina County Crisis Management Response Unit may also be notified for students who demonstrate a medium to high risk. Parents will be asked to sign the No-Harm Agreement upon picking up their child from campus.

## SUICIDE INTERVENTION PROTOCOL CHART FOR CAMPUSES



COLUMBIA SUICIDE SEVERITY RATING SCALE (CSSR)  
Screen Version - Recent

|   | Past Month |    | Lifetime (Worst Point) |    |
|---|------------|----|------------------------|----|
| Ask questions that are bolded and <u>underlined</u> .   | YES        | NO | YES                    | NO |
| <b>Ask Questions 1 and 2</b>  |            |    |                        |    |
| 1) <b><u>Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?</u></b>   |            |    |                        |    |
| 2) <b><u>Have you actually had any thoughts of killing yourself?</u></b>  |            |    |                        |    |
| If YES to 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5, and 6. If NO to 2, go directly to question 6.   |            |    |                        |    |
| 3) <b><u>Have you been thinking about how you might do this?</u></b><br>E.g. "I thought about taking an overdose but I never made a specific plan as to when where or how I would actually do it....and I would never go through with it."  |            |    |                        |    |
| 4) <b><u>Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?</u></b><br>As opposed to "I have the thoughts but I definitely will not do anything about them."   |            |    |                        |    |
| 5) <b><u>Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?</u></b>  |            |    |                        |    |
| 6) <b><u>Have you ever done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?</u></b>  |            |    | YES                    | NO |
| Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, took out pills but didn't swallow any, held a gun but changed your mind or it was grabbed from your hand, went to the roof but didn't jump; or actually took pills, tried to shoot yourself, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc. |            |    |                        |    |
| If YES, ask: <b><u>Was this within the past three months?</u></b>   |            |    |                        |    |

■ Low Risk

■ Moderate Risk

■ High Risk

For inquiries and training information contact: Kelly Posner, Ph.D.  
New York State Psychiatric Institute, 1051 Riverside Drive, New York, New York, 10032;  
posnerk@nyspi.columbia.edu

© 2008 The Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc.

# Zavalla INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 328 Zavalla, TEXAS 75980 PHONE: 936-897-2271 FAX: 936-422-4779

## STUDENT RISK NOTICE AND PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Campus: (check) ☐ Zavalla Elementary ☐ Zavalla High School ☐  
☐ Zavalla Intermediate ☐ Pride  
Zavalla Middle School

I am the parent, guardian, or custodian of the student whose name is \_\_\_\_\_,  
I have the authority to make decisions on behalf of my student and have the full authority to  
sign this document. I affirm and acknowledge that I have advised by school staff member  
\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), 20\_\_\_\_,  
at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) that my student is at risk for the following conduct:

- ☐ risk of suicide
- ☐ risk of injurious self-harm
- ☐ risk of illegal or other substance abuse

I acknowledge that it is the clear and unequivocal recommendation of the Zavalla ISD that my  
student be taken immediately to the appropriate medical and /or mental health providers for  
immediate evaluation and treatment.

☐ I agree to provide appropriate information to key faculty and staff concerning any  
evaluations and/or treatment afforded to my student, this will include a written physician's  
permission to return to school and the written care plan provided by the physician or a  
written statement that a care plan is not needed, so that the Zavalla ISD will be  
adequately prepared to address and support the continued well-being of my student. I  
understand that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of staff member)  
will follow up with me and my student within two weeks from this date and at such other  
times as the staff member determines. If a physician is seen, the physician forms must be  
provided prior to your student returning to school.

☐ I choose not to follow the Zavalla ISD recommendation that my student be taken  
immediately to the appropriate medical and/or mental health providers for immediate  
evaluation and treatment. (Must sign the Parent Assessment Refusal Form.

Finally, I acknowledge that any referral information provided to me by the Zavalla ISD that  
identifies medical, mental health, or related agency providers is simply information for me to  
consider. I am not bound to use such providers in the evaluation and treatment of my  
student and I may select other providers of my own choosing. Unless otherwise required by  
law, Zavalla ISD is not responsible for any medical treatment or evaluation expenses whether  
I use the preferred providers or use others of my own choosing.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Address and phone contact information:

\_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Suicide Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

**For Office Use Only:**

*Provide one copy to parent and make one copy for records. Retain one copy on campus and provide original to the Campus Administrator within one business day of the event.*

Follow up with child, parent, and agency due by this date:

\_\_\_\_\_ (2 weeks)

Follow up with child\_\_\_\_\_ (date completed),

Follow up with parent \_\_\_\_\_ (date completed)

Follow up with agency\_\_\_\_\_ (date completed).

### Agency name and contact information

Follow up notes:

[illegible]

# Zavalla INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

---

P.O. BOX 328 Zavalla, TEXAS 75980 PHONE: 936-897-2271 FAX: 936-422-4779

## PARENT ASSESSMENT REFUSAL FORM

I am a parent of the student whose name appears below. I have been provided with Zavalla Independent School District Student Risk Notice. I acknowledge that I have been informed that my student is at risk for one or more of the behaviors or conduct listed in that notice. Having been fully informed of the risks and dangers associated with my student's conduct and having been advised that my student should be taken immediately to the appropriate medical and/or mental health providers for immediate evaluation and treatment, I respectfully decline such referrals. I acknowledge that the Zavalla ISD has timely and properly informed me of my student's situation and that the Zavalla ISD is not responsible for the actions that I may choose to take or not take in response to the notice.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Campus

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of School Counselor/Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Suicide Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

# Zavalla INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 328 Zavalla, TEXAS 75980 PHONE: 936-897-2271 FAX: 936-422-4779

## STUDENT SUICIDE RISK REPORT

Assessed Level of Risk: \_\_\_\_\_Low \_\_\_\_\_Medium \_\_\_\_\_High

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

Campus \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Risk Assessed By \_\_\_\_\_

### Actions Taken

### Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Student Conference \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Notified principal, key personnel \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent contacted by phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent conference \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Consultation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent Acknowledgement Form signed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Release of Information signed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Mental Health Provider Referral \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Suicide Attempt \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Previous Suicide Attempt \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Hospitalization \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Previous Hospitalization \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_



## SCHOOL RE-ENTRY

Efforts to respond to suicide attempts and other traumas should be focused on making the student's return to school a comfortable one. Because families exposed to a suicide attempt or serious suicidal threat experience considerable guilt and fear, they are more likely to disclose information if they know the school has a helpful, nonthreatening manner of dealing with suicide.

Because a student who attempted/threatens suicide often is at greater risk for a suicide in the months following the crisis, it is extremely important to closely monitor his or her re-entry into school and to maintain close contact with parents and mental health professionals working with that student.

Assuming the student will be absent after a suicide attempt/serious threat and possibly hospitalized in a treatment facility, schools should follow these steps:

- ☐ Obtain a written release of information signed by the parents. This makes it possible for confidential information to be shared between school personnel and treatment providers.
- ☐ Ask returning student if he/she has special requests about what is said or done by school.
- ☐ Inform the student's teachers regarding the number of probable days of absence.
- ☐ Instruct teachers to provide the students with assignments, if appropriate.
- ☐ Once the student returns to school, a Crisis Management Team member should maintain regular contact with the student. If the student has a previous, positive relationship with a trusted staff member, provide support to that staff member in maintaining ongoing contact with the student.
- ☐ Obtain physician/therapist recommendations for aftercare from the student's parent/guardian. If the student has been hospitalized, obtain a copy of discharge orders and safety plan if developed.
- ☐ The Crisis Management Team should convene to create a safety plan. The safety plan and relevant non-confidential information should be conveyed to appropriate school staff.
- ☐ The school should maintain contact with the parents to provide progress reports and other appropriate information, and be kept informed of any changes in the aftercare plan.

Adapted from "Resource Guide for Crisis Management in Virginia Schools" published by the Office of Compensatory Programs, Virginia Department of Education, 2002, accessed at <http://www.indiana-ins.com> on January 18, 2010.

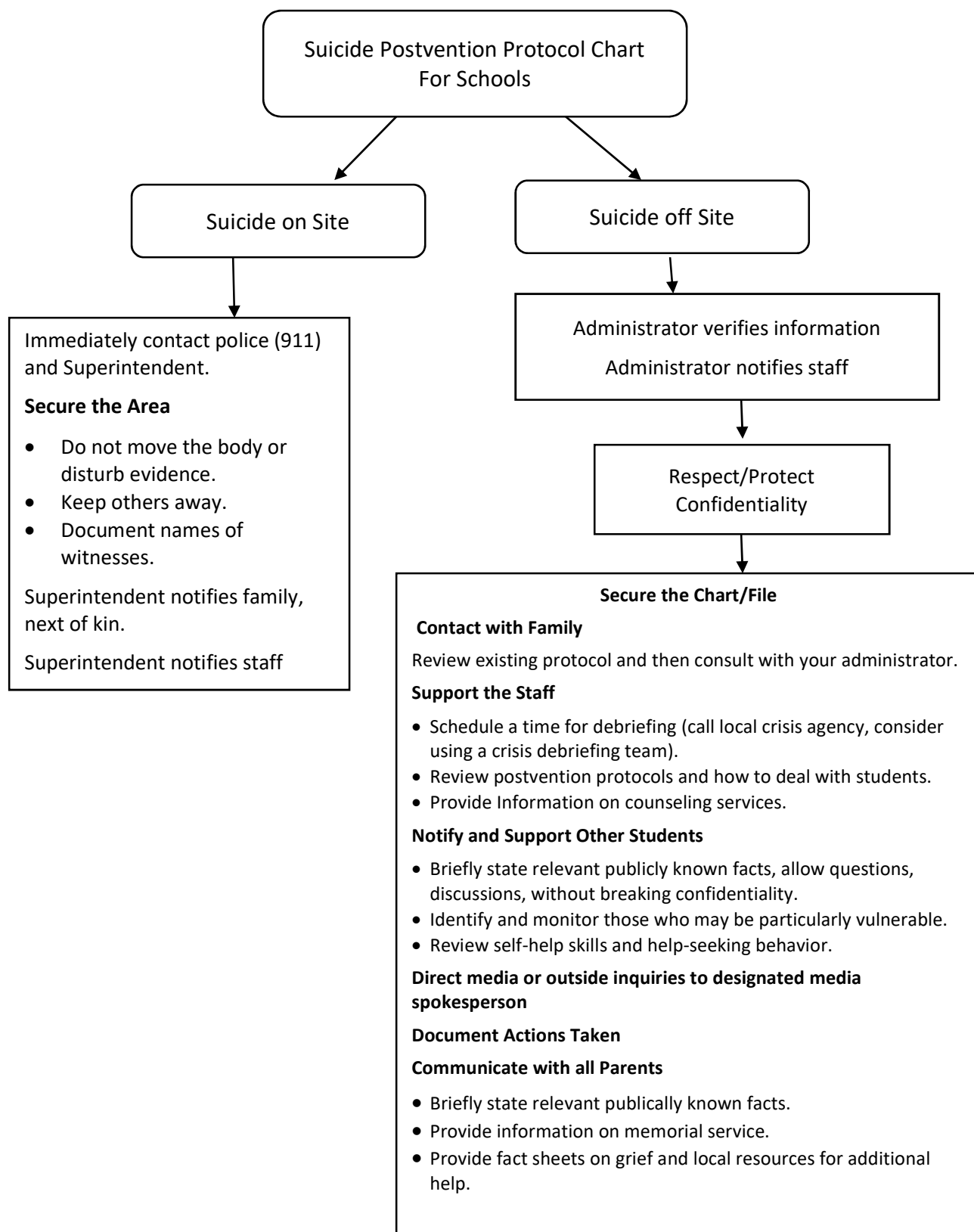
## POSTVENTION AFTER A SUICIDE

### **Postvention District Steps:**

1. Verify that a death has occurred and confirm cause.
2. Mobilize the School Crisis Response Team.
3. Assess the suicide's impact on the school and estimate the level of needed postvention response.
4. Notify and support school staff.
5. Contact the family of the suicide victim.
  - Contact should be made in person and as soon as possible but certainly within 24 hours of the death. Try to:
    - Express sympathy
    - Offer support or identify the victim's friends who may need assistance
    - Discuss the school's postvention response
    - Identify details about the death that could be shared with outsiders
    - Discuss funeral arrangements and whether the family wants school personnel and/or students to attend
6. Determine what information to share about the suicide.
  - Sample Letters should be available to use as templates depending on the messaging;
  - Death has been ruled a suicide
  - Cause is unconfirmed (ask that rumors not be spread)
  - Family has requested cause of death not be disclosed.
7. Determine how to share information about the death
8. Identify students significantly affected by the suicide and initiate a referral mechanism
  - Risk Factors for Imitative Behavior
    - Facilitated the suicide
    - Failed to recognize the suicidal intent
    - Believe they may have caused the suicide
    - Had a relationship with the suicide victim
    - Identify with the suicide victim
    - Have a history of prior suicidal behavior
    - Have a history of psychopathology
    - Show symptoms of helplessness and/or hopelessness
    - Have suffered significant life stressors or losses of lack internal and external resources

9. Conduct a faculty planning session
10. Initiate crisis intervention services
11. Memorials (should you decide to make one)
  - Strive to treat all student deaths the same way
  - Encourage and allow students, with parental permission, to attend the funeral or reach out to the family of the victim
  - Contribute to a suicide prevention effort in the community
  - Develop living memorials, such as student assistance programs, that address risk factors in local youth
  - Address spontaneous memorials on school grounds
  - Prohibiting all memorials is problematic
  - Recognize the challenge to strike a balance between needs of distraught students and fulfilling the primary purpose of education
  - Meet with students and be creative and compassionate
  - Spontaneous memorials should be left in place until after the funeral
  - Avoid holding services on school grounds
  - Monitor off campus gatherings
  - Student newspaper coverage should follow media reporting guidelines available at [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) and [www.reportingonsuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org) and use safe messaging which can be found at <http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/migrate/library/SafeMessagingrevised.pdf>
  - Yearbook and graduation dedication or tributes should all be treated the same regardless of the cause of death of the student.
  - Grieving friends and family should be discouraged from dedicating a school event and guided instead towards promoting suicide prevention
  - Permanent memorials on campus are discouraged, but schools need to memorialize all students the same way regardless of the cause of death. If a precedent has already been set for flying flags at half-mast or planting a tree on campus, then it should be continued
13. Debrief the postvention response with school crisis team members and identify needed additional actions.

## SUICIDE POSTVENTION PROTOCOL CHART





## SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF AFTER A DEATH

### Option #1

The following announcements have been suggested for use when addressing students, faculty, and staff. These announcements should be presented in a small meeting room as soon as possible following the death. A member of the crisis team and possibly the principal should lead the meetings. The goals of the meetings are to inform the faculty, students, and staff and allow them time to express their emotions, and prepare them to meet and deal with a suicidal crisis. Faculty should be informed of the suicide first and they should be given time to express their emotions and concerns before informing their students.

#### Day 1

##### Sample Announcement For When a Suicide Death has Occurred

###### Morning, Day 1

"This morning we heard the extremely sad news that \_\_\_\_\_ died by suicide last night. I know we are all saddened by his death and send our condolences to his family and friends. Crisis stations will be located throughout the school today for students who wish to talk to a counselor. Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission."

##### Sample Announcement For a Suspicious Death Not Declared Suicide

###### Morning, Day 1

"This morning we heard the extremely sad news that \_\_\_\_\_ died last night. This is the only information we have officially received on the circumstances surrounding the event. I know we are all saddened by \_\_\_\_\_'s death and send our condolences to his family and friends. Crisis stations will be located throughout the school today for students who wish to talk to a counselor. Information about the funeral will be provided when it is available, and students may attend with parental permission."

##### Sample Announcement Primary or Middle School

###### Morning, Day 1

"We want to take some time this morning to talk about something very sad. (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, an eighth grader, died unexpectedly last night. At this point, we do not officially know the cause of (his/her) \_\_\_\_\_ death. Death is a difficult issue for anyone to deal with. Even if you didn't know \_\_\_\_\_, you might still have some emotional reactions to hearing about this.

It is very important to be able to express our feelings about \_\_\_\_\_'s death, especially our loss and sadness. We want you to know that there are teachers and counselors available in the library all through the day to talk with you about your reaction to \_\_\_\_\_'s death. If you want to talk with somebody, you will be given a pass to go to the library where we have people who will help us through this difficult time."

## End of Day 1 Announcement

At the end of the first day, another announcement to the whole school prior to dismissal can serve to join the whole school in their grieving in a simple, non-sensationalized way. In this case, it is appropriate for the building administrator to make an announcement similar to the following over the loud speaker:

“Today has been a sad day for all of us. We encourage you to talk about \_\_\_\_\_’s death with your friends, your family, and whoever else gives you support. We will have special staff here for you tomorrow to help in dealing with our loss. Let us end the day by having the whole school offer a moment of silence for \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Day 2 Announcement

On the second day following the death, many schools have found it helpful to start the day with another announcement by each teacher in their homeroom. This announcement can include additional verified information, re-emphasize the continuing availability of in-school resources and provide information to facilitate grief. Here’s a sample of how this announcement might be handled:

“We now know that \_\_\_\_\_’s death has been declared a suicide. Even though we might try to understand the reasons for his/her doing this, we can never really know what was going on that made him/her take his/her life. One thing that’s important to remember is that there is never just one reason for a suicide. There are always many reasons or causes and we will never be able to figure them all out.

Today we begin the process of returning to a normal schedule in school. This may be hard for some of us to do. Counselors are still available in school to help us deal with our feelings. If you feel the need to speak to a counselor, either alone or with a friend, tell a teacher, the principal, or the school nurse, and they will help make the arrangements.

We also have information about the visitation and funeral. The visitation will be held tomorrow evening at the \_\_\_\_\_ Funeral Home from \_\_\_\_\_ pm. There will be a funeral Service \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm at \_\_\_\_\_ Church. In order to be excused from school to attend the funeral, you will need to be accompanied by a parent or relative, or have your parent’s permission to attend. We also encourage you to ask your parents to go with you to the funeral home.”

## Option #2

### SAMPLE LETTER TO STAFF

Date:

To: All Staff

From: INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL Crisis Team

Re: INSERT NAME OF DECEASED

The recent death of (Insert Name) (has OR is expected to make) a significant impact on our entire school community. Our crisis team has been mobilized to respond to this tragic event.

On (insert date), (Insert name of deceased)<sup>1</sup> (INSERT brief facts about the death)<sup>2</sup>. We expect a variety of reactions to this loss from our students, parents, and members of our staff. Some of these reactions may be mild, others may be more intense.

To effectively assist all members of our school community, an emergency staff meeting will be held at (Insert time) on (Insert date) in the (Insert place such as the cafeteria or other large area). At that time, our crisis team will provide further details and answer questions. We will also discuss how to present the information to our students. In the meantime, please refer all inquiries from outside sources to (Insert name of the Media or Communication Coordinator).

With students, you can acknowledge that this death has occurred. However, please avoid discussion of any details; simply tell students that the school staff will provide information to everyone shortly. Please refer any student who appears to be in crisis or having significant difficulty to (Insert name of Counseling Services Coordinator). As this tragedy has also affected our staff, we encourage you to also seek assistance from (Insert name of Counseling Services Coordinator), if desired.

### Emergency Staff Meeting

Time:

Date:

Location:

If you have any questions or concerns before the meeting, please contact (Insert name of Crisis Team Coordinator).

Examples of information to insert in the opening paragraph:

<sup>1</sup>John Smith, one of our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students; Mrs. Jones, who taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade English

<sup>2</sup>was killed in an automobile accident; died after a long-illness; died suddenly; died by suicide (*before inserting this information, be sure the immediate family is fine with this information being released*)

## SAMPLE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

*This information should be given to teachers and other staff to read to students at a designated time to share with the entire student body (e.g., homeroom or first/second period)*

It is with sadness that I tell you about a loss to our school family. On (INSERT date) (INSERT name of deceased) (INSERT fact about the death).

I understand that many of you may have upsetting feelings and questions about (INSERT name of deceased)'s death. I will try to answer any questions that I can. If you would like, we will take the remainder of this class period to talk about what has happened. At times like this, it is okay to have many different feelings, including sadness, anger, and disbelief. It is okay to cry. Together, we can talk about whatever you may be feeling or want to talk about. If I cannot answer your questions, or you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms now available (INSERT where support rooms are located). Anyone who would like to go to talk to someone in the support rooms may do so now. I will give you a pass.

*Determine which students would like to leave for a support room. Ask the remaining students if they have any questions or comments they would like to share. Take time to answer and to talk as the students' desire.*

*If there is not lengthy discussion, consider quiet seat work rather than lesson plans as usual.*

## SAMPLE NOTIFICATIONS FOR PARENTS FOLLOWING A SUICIDE

### Sample #1

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Parent(s)/Caretaker(s),**

The death of a child is a sad and tragic event, and the sudden death of our student, \_\_\_\_\_ (name), has touched both students and faculty here at \_\_\_\_\_ High School.

Based on the information provided to us by the medical examiner and the family, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of student) died by suicide on \_\_\_\_\_ (day), \_\_\_\_\_ (month) \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

The funeral arrangements are as follows: \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ (name) request that students \_\_\_\_\_ attend/do not attend. In addition, donations may be sent in care of \_\_\_\_\_.

Since the news of the death, the school has implemented a crisis response plan to help the students and staff respond to this unfortunate death. In conjunction with colleagues from \_\_\_\_\_ (community agencies), the school continues to provide/has provided professionally staffed support stations available to all students. In addition, students continue to meet with staff from our counseling and social work departments.

In the days and weeks ahead, students may have questions and concerns relating to the death and are going to require your support at home and our continued support here at school as they work through their feelings and grief. Although we cannot predict how any child may react, we can be sensitive and aware, both at home and at school, of the common reactions experienced by grieving adolescents.

If you feel your child is having difficulty and may benefit from additional support, please feel free to contact \_\_\_\_\_, the Crisis Team Leader, your child's guidance counselor, or myself so the school can be aware of the needs of your child. We are also supported by local mental health professionals and can provide you with referrals as needed. In addition, if you are interested in attending a parent/caretaker meeting, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone) for further information and registration.

As the school community continues to cope with the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ (name), we invite your participation in the healing process. Please feel free to contact the school at any time with questions or concerns.

Source: "School-based Youth Suicide Prevention guide," published by the Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, 2003, accessed at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/institute/pubs/bysubject.html](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/institute/pubs/bysubject.html)

## Sample #2

Date

Dear parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ School students:

The \_\_\_\_\_ School community was saddened to learn of the apparent suicide of one of our students. The death of any young person is a loss which, in one way or another, diminishes each of us. The tragic circumstances of \_\_\_\_\_'s death are perhaps more shocking and more difficult to accept.

We have asked the assistance of the crisis team to help our school community deal with this loss. We are doing everything we can to help your child and our staff through this tragic experience. You may anticipate more questions and a need to talk about the suicide at home.

Jim's funeral will be held at \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. Your child may be excused from school to attend the funeral with a written permission from you. We encourage you to make arrangements to accompany him or her and you will need to provide your own transportation. The school will remain open for those students not attending the funeral. \_\_\_\_\_'s classmates and teachers have decided to receive donations in his memory and will make a contribution to \_\_\_\_\_. Please contact the school office at \_\_\_\_\_ for further information.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's reactions to this loss, \_\_\_\_\_, the school nurse, \_\_\_\_\_, the school counselor, or one of the crisis team members will be available to assist you.

Sincerely,

---

School Principal

Source: School-Based Crisis Management Recommendations on Suicide by Suicide Awareness Voices of Education  
accessed at [http://www.preventioninflorida.org/SP2006/materials/school\\_crisis\\_plan.pdf](http://www.preventioninflorida.org/SP2006/materials/school_crisis_plan.pdf)

### Sample #3

Date

Dear Parent,

It is with deep regret that we inform you about a recent loss to our school community. On (INSERT date), (INSERT name of the deceased)<sup>1</sup> (INSERT brief facts about the death)<sup>2</sup>. This loss is sure to raise many emotions, concerns, and questions for our entire school, especially our students.

Our school (and INSERT name of school district, if applicable) has a Crisis Intervention Team made up of a professionals trained to help with the needs of students, parents, and school personnel at difficult times such as this. At our school (or INSERT name of alternative school), we have counselors available for any student who may need or want help or any type of assistance surrounding this loss. We encourage you, as parents, to also feel free to use our resources.

We have enclosed some information that may be useful to you in helping your child at home. If you would like additional information or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact (INSERT name of Communications Coordinator or Counseling Services Coordinator) at (INSERT phone number).

We are saddened by the loss to our school community and will make every effort to help you and your child as you need.

Sincerely,

(Type the name of the signer and title. This letter is usually signed by the principal, superintendent, or crisis team coordinator)

Examples of information to insert in the opening paragraph:

<sup>1</sup>John Smith, one of our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students; Mrs. Jones, who taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade English

<sup>2</sup>was killed in an automobile accident; died after a long-illness; died suddenly;

died by suicide (*before inserting this information, be sure the immediate family is fine with this information being released*)

(Source: National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/svc/alpha/s/school-crisis/letters-template.htm>, accessed January 18, 2010.)

## RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA

Any response to the Media will be the Superintendent of School or his/her designee.

Filming or interviewing students or staff on school grounds should be prohibited, as the process of filming is likely to be intrusive and distressing. The spokesperson needs to respond to the media in a timely and professional manner. However, the school should avoid becoming the principal source of information. Releasing details about the suicide is the responsibility of the medical examiner or other authorities. Never permit speculation as to why the student or faculty member committed suicide. It is the family's sole prerogative to provide information about the victim. The school can explain the positive steps of the postvention plan to help students through the crisis and provide information on where troubled youth can get help. This becomes especially important in circumstances where the suicide becomes a major news story and the focus needs to be shifted from the school to the larger community.

## SAMPLE FORMAL STATEMENT TO NOTIFY MEDIA OF SUICIDE

\_\_\_\_\_ High School is sad to report that it has confirmed the death of one of its students, \_\_\_\_\_, with the medical examiner's office and the deceased's family. \_\_\_\_\_ (first name), a \_\_\_\_\_-year-old (age) \_\_\_\_\_ (grade), died \_\_\_\_\_ (day) [died by suicide].

He/she was a resident of \_\_\_\_\_ and was active in \_\_\_\_\_ at the school. Funeral arrangements are not available at this time. School counselors and community mental health representatives are available to any student who wishes to talk about \_\_\_\_\_'s death.

- List community resources
- List ways the media can be helpful with postvention

## SAMPLE RESPONSE TO INCOMING CALLS FROM MEDIA

The school has designated a media spokesperson. Please feel free to contact \_\_\_\_\_ with your questions and concerns. We would like to respond to your questions in an organized manner. To assist you, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will be meeting with concerned members of the media at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) in \_\_\_\_\_ (place). At that time we will provide information about the school's response to our loss and identify additional resources in the community to support the bereaved.

Source: "School-based Youth Suicide Prevention guide," published by the Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, 2003, accessed at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/institute/pubs/bysubject.html](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/institute/pubs/bysubject.html)



## AGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

All Emergencies.....911

### Mental Health

Burke Center (M-F).....936.639.2384

Crisis Hotline.....800.392.8343

Family Counseling Associates.....936.630.3799

### Department of Family Children's Services

Child Abuse Prevention.....800.252.5400

State Department of Human Services.....936.632.7708

Women/Children's Shelter.....800.828.7233

Drug & Alcohol Abuse Hotline.....936.634.5753

Poison Control Center.....800.222.1222

Mobile Crisis Outreach Team.....936.674.3550

### Law Enforcement

Zavalla Police Department.....936.897.8209

Angelina County Sheriff Department.....936.634.3331

Zavalla ISD

NOTICE AND CONSENT TO RELEASE/REQUEST CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

**TO THE PARENT(S):** The LEA must obtain your informed consent before the disclosure of confidential information of your child. If you indicate **YES** in response to all of the statements below and sign at the bottom, you will be giving your consent for disclosure of your child's confidential information to :

To:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This consent for disclosure of confidential information is for disclosure of your child's record(s)/confidential information between another party and Zavalla ISD, as follows:

From:

Address:

Telephone Number:

FAX Number:

Purpose of Disclosure:

Records to be Released/Requested:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐ Yes ☐ No I have been fully informed of the record(s) to be disclosed, the purpose of the disclosure, who will disclose the record(s), and who will receive the record(s).

☐ Yes ☐ No I give my consent for the disclosure of confidential information.

☐ Yes ☐ No I understand that my consent for the disclosure of confidential information is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. However, that revocation is not retroactive (i.e., it does not negate an action that has occurred after the consent was given and before the consent was revoked).

☐ Yes ☐ No The information provided to me has been provided in my native language or other mode of communication. If other than English, specify: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Parent/Adult Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interpreter/Language if used

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Zavalla ISD

VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF CARE PLAN

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Received from: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that I have received and will follow the care plan for this student.

|                    |                               |               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Teacher              | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Campus Counselor     | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Campus Administrator | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Campus Administrator | _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Signature | _____<br>Campus Administrator | _____<br>Date |

File this receipt with the student's care plan.

## RESOURCES

### Websites

<http://www.texassuicideprevention.org>

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa/suicide/Suicide-Prevention.aspx>

<http://www.drugfreetexas.org>

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/sa/PRC>

<http://www.txssc.txstate.edu/K12/eop>

### Recommended Reading

The listings below are books for parents and teachers to use with children at various age levels to explain death. The age and grade level listing enables parents and teachers to select books that are developmentally appropriate for the child in terms of language and content. This listing is broad and no one book is implicitly recommended. The adult should first read the book to determine its acceptability and relevant and later read the book with the child(ren). Encourage the child(ren) to express their emotions while reading and discussing the books.

It is important to determine what message you expect a child(ren) to get from a book. Ask the child(ren) to explain their interpretations about stories as they are read to determine if there are distortions or misperceptions to be clarified. Two key tasks are to help the child(ren) gain a realistic concept of death and to cope with the feelings that accompany death.

### For Children

About Dying. Sara Bonnett Stein. Walker and Co. (Pre K – grade 3)

The Accident. Carol Carrick. New York: Seabury Press, 1976.

Am I Still a Sister? Alvin Sims.

Children Are Not Paper Dolls. Erin Linn Leroy.

Dead Bird. Margaret Brown. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1965. (Grades K-3)

Death is Natural. Laurence Pringle. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1977. (Grades K-3)

Dusty Was My Friend. Andrea F. Clardy. New York: Human Science Press, 1984. (Grades 1-3)

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf. Leo Buscaglia. New York: Charles B. Slack, Inc. 1982. (Grades 4-8)

Grover. Bill Cleaver. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1970. (Not about the Sesame Street Character. About a mother's suicide.) (Ages 9-13)

Growing Time. Sandol Stoddard Warbarg. Boston: Houghton Mufflin Co., 1969.

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids. A. Wolfelt. Fort Collins, CO: Companion 2001.

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas. A. Wolfelt. Fort Collins, CO: Companion

How It Feels When A Parent Dies. Jill Krementz. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1987. (Grades 7-12)

The Kids Book About Death and Dying. Eric Rolfes.

I'll Miss You, Mr. Hooper. N. Stiles. New York: Random House/Children's Television Workshop, 1984. (Grades 1-3)

Loss and How to Cope With It. J. Bernstein. New York: Houghton, 1976. (For adolescents)

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children. Brian Melanie and Robert Ingpen. New York: Bantam Books, 1983. (Grades K-3)

The Magic Moth. Virginia Lee. New York: Seabury Press, 1972. (Grades 3-8)

Me and My Little Brain. John Fitzgerald. New York: Dial Press, 1971. (Grades K-3)

The Mulberry Music. Doris Ogel. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. (Ages 9-13)

My Brother Joey Died. Gloria McLendon.

A Taste of Blackberries. Doris Buchanan Smith. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973. (For Ages 8-13)

The Tenth Good Thing about Barney. J. Viorst. New York: Atheneum, 1972. (Grades K-3)

When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving and Healing. M.E. Gootman. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1994.

When People Die. J.E. Bernstein and S.V. Gullo. New York: Dutton, 1977. (Grades K-3)  
(Gives theories on afterlife)

When Someone Dies. Sharon Greenlee. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishing, 1992.

When Someone Very Special Dies. Marge Heegaard. (Ages 6-12)

Why Did Grandpa Die? A Book About Death. B. Hazen. Racine, WI: Western Publishing Co., 1985.

Why Has Grandpa Gone? R. Kopp. Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderman, 1983.

Why Did He Die? Audrey Harris. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1965. (Grades K-3)

It Must Hurt A Lot. Doris Sanford and Graci Evans. Multnomah Press.

Tell Me Papa. Joy and Marv Johnson. Centering Press.

A Terrible Thing Happened - A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma. Margaret M. Holmes, and Sasha J. Mudlaff. 2000.

#### For Parents/Teachers

About Dying: An Open Book for Parents and Children Together. Sara Bonnett Stein. New York: Walker and Co., 1977. (Grades K-3)

Are You Sad Too? Helping Children Deal with Loss and Death. Danah Seibert, Judy C. Drolet, Joyce V. Fetro. Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates, 1993. (to age 10).

Children's Experience with Death. R. Zeligs. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1974.

Explaining Death to Children. Earl A. Grollman, comp. Boston Beacon Press, 1967.

For Those Who Live: Helping Children Cope with the Death of a Brother or Sister. Kathy LaZour. Dallas, TX, 1983.

Helping Children Cope. J. Fassler. New York: Free Press, 1978.

Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss. Claudia Jewett. Harvard, MA: Harvard Common Press, 1982.

How Do We Tell Children?: A Step-by-Step Guide for Helping Children Two to Teen Cope When Someone Dies. Don Schaeffer and Christine Lyons. New York: Newmarket Press, 1993

Learning to Say Goodbye; When a Parent Dies. Eda LeShan. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1976. (Grades 3-6)

No Time for Goodbyes: Coping with Sorrow, Anger and Injustice After a Tragic Death. Janice Harris Ford.

On Children and Death. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. New York: MacMillan, 1983.

Questions on Death and Dying. R.E. Kubler. New York: Collier, 1974. (Grades 3-6)

Talking About Death: A dialogue between parent and child. Earl Grollman. Boston: Beacon, 1976. (Grades 3-6)

Talking With Young Children About Death - A Message from Fred Rogers. Fred Rogers. Family communications Inc. VIDEO

Telling a Child About Death. Edgar N. Jackson. Hawthorn/Dutton.

Adapted from Department of Health and Human Services Template