

ATTACHMENT 4.23

NOTIFYING STUDENTS OF A DEATH | SUICIDE / PERMITTED TO DISCLOSE

The following script is intended to be used when notifying students of a death. In this case, “death” refers to a staff or student suicide-death **and** the family has given the school permission to disclose cause of death.

Notification Announcement | Day 1

This announcement should always be made in classrooms, preferably by teachers or SMHT members. It should never be made over the school’s PA system, over email, or in assemblies.

Today we learned the extremely sad news that [insert name of deceased] died by suicide [last night/this morning/yesterday]. This is the only information we have officially received or have permission to share. Information about memorial services will be provided when it becomes available, and students may attend with caregiver permission. We are saddened by [insert name of deceased]’s death and will keep [his/her/their] family and friends in our hearts.

I know this news is difficult to take in, and whatever you are feeling right now is valid and okay. Even if you didn’t know [insert name of deceased] very well, any loss can trigger your own personal experiences. I’m here to support you, and there are crisis counselors available today in [location] for anyone who wants to talk. Please let me or your other teachers know if you’d like to speak to a crisis counselor at any point throughout the day. You can also call or text 9-8-8 anytime for any reason.

AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Be sure to make space for students to take the news in and react to it. It’s okay if lesson plans are thwarted and that this suicide-loss is discussed instead. It’s not necessary to spend the entirety of the class period focusing on the loss unless the students are engaged in conversation about it. Offering coloring pages or other distractions instead of returning to lesson plans as scheduled can be a way to provide support without focusing on the loss directly. It is common for students not to be able to focus on schoolwork after learning about a suicide death, even if they were not close with the person who died. Any death can bring up personal experiences of loss, and suicide deaths can be especially triggering to those who have lost a loved one to suicide or who have other lived experiences related to suicide.

Utilize *Attachment 4.24* to help you navigate a discussion about suicide and suicide-loss. If you get to a point where you’re unsure how to proceed, feel free to call an SMHT member into your classroom for assistance.