

Immediate response checklist

24hrs–48hrs**Immediate****1 week–3 months****Short-term****3 months–12 months****Longer-term**

This stage focuses on the important task of informing the school community – staff, students and parents/carers – of the incident (suicide) that has occurred.

A cautionary note regarding the timeframe specified above: in some instances, there may be a delay in receiving initial reports of a suicide that exceeds the 24–48-hour timeframe. Regardless of the time since the incident occurred, informing the community remains a priority in order to appropriately identify and support those students who may be at increased risk or vulnerability.

Effective postvention support is a suicide prevention strategy among those people exposed to and bereaved by suicide. Postvention is, therefore, prevention for the future (Andriessen, 2009).

Key actions in this stage include:

- responding to the physical and emotional safety of students and staff
- confirming the details of the incident
- activating the school's Emergency Management Plan and reporting the incident to Incident Support Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126 as soon as practicable to activate additional support from area and regional staff
- respectfully and sensitively communicating with the bereaved family
- informing staff, students and other parents/carers
- supporting the wellbeing of students and staff
- monitoring and following up on student absences
- liaising with community youth mental health services and neighbouring schools
- responding to media and social media content as necessary
- timely documentation of key actions.

Remember

As an employee of the Department of Education and Training (the Department) you and your immediate family members (18 years and

older) can access professional, counselling and mental wellbeing support through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Confidential counselling is delivered virtually, by phone or face-to-face at a time that is convenient for you. To organise support call **1300 361 008 – 24 hours a day 7 days a week**. This service is fully funded by the Department.

Actions	Person responsible
Initial actions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm the facts before enacting a response. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with local police and/or hospital staff or make sensitive enquiries with the parents/carers or a student's emergency contacts. 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure physical and emotional safety by tending to the immediate needs of students and staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Call 000 if medical assistance is required and/or police support to restore safety.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Enact your school's Emergency Management Plan (EMP).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Report incident to the Department's Incident Support Coordination. Support (ISOC) Team 1800 126 126 as soon as practicable to activate additional support from area and regional staff.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider a Worksafe Notification (13 23 60).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Convene your Incident Management Team (IMT).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure capacity of the IMT to prioritise tasks required to support the school's response.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Download the pre-prepared scripts and resources on PAL	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact your Be You consultant for assistance with coordination, resources and support.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Organise additional CRTs.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Begin identifying vulnerable and at-risk students and provide individual support as needed.	
Actions to support the bereaved family	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the SSS for guidance and support.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify a staff member to be the key contact for liaising with the bereaved family.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure you have accurate facts before making contact with the family.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Be mindful that the family's availability to communicate will vary greatly and be influenced by a range of factors.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider, and be sensitive to, specific cultural or religious needs (do not assume to know what the student's family and community will need and the cultural protocols that will apply).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine if a translator is required.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer the school's condolences and, if appropriate, a home visit.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Seek consent from the family to inform the school community of the death.	
Determine: <input type="checkbox"/> how the family want to refer to their child's death when communicating with the broader school community, noting the family must give consent to refer to the death as a suicide. <input type="checkbox"/> if they give permission for their child's name to be used.	

Actions	Person responsible
Actions to inform and support staff	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify staff to be told individually prior to an all staff meeting.	
<p>Consider:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> how you will bring staff together <input type="checkbox"/> how you will inform members of the school community who are not present (e.g. part-time staff, staff on leave, regular CRTs, allied health professionals supporting the student) <input type="checkbox"/> how you will monitor staff wellbeing upon hearing the news and in the coming day.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Convene a staff meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Use the <u>pre-prepared script</u> <p>Other key points to share include:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> any changes in routine <input type="checkbox"/> details about the support room and any additional supports that has been/ will be put in place <input type="checkbox"/> the importance of identifying students who are likely to be the most impacted and will need additional support <input type="checkbox"/> that students will be informed via a pre-planned structure using a prepared script <input type="checkbox"/> the importance of following up on attendance and absenteeism. <p>Reiterate:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> staff wellbeing is a priority and there is support available <input type="checkbox"/> the method of suicide (if known) should not be disclosed to students <input type="checkbox"/> additional CRTs have been organised <input type="checkbox"/> staff play a key role in monitoring student wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> any concerns about a student must be raised with a member of the student wellbeing team/relevant staff member. <p>Share</p> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Self-care for school staff following exposure to a suicide</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage staff to access the EAP	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare staff to inform students using the pre-prepared script. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow time for staff to understand the process and ask questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage staff to consider any students who may require additional support or personalised approach. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide staff with information about the likely reactions and questions from students. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow staff to opt out of telling students.	
<p>Conduct an end-of-day briefing to:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> enable staff to debrief <input type="checkbox"/> provide staff with any relevant updates (further information from the family, changes to routine, activities undertaken during the day etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> invite them to share what they have observed in their classrooms <input type="checkbox"/> communicate the plan for the following day, including the frequency of staff briefing <input type="checkbox"/> reiterate the importance of self-care, help-seeking and accessing EAP <input type="checkbox"/> check-in with staff and observe for any staff that may require additional support.	

Actions	Person responsible
Actions to inform and support students	
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a student support room and organise appropriate supervision Considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Location – ensure it is accessible to students and staff with a disability <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision <input type="checkbox"/> Duration that the space is available <input type="checkbox"/> Resources and resourcing. 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly identify the person(s) responsible for conducting suicide risk assessments in your school and ensure the process for actioning these referrals is clearly communicated to all staff.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate news of suicide and supports in place to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the <u>pre-prepared script</u> • Inform students in the recommended order • As appropriate for your students, select and distribute information on grief, accessing support and good mental health. • See <u>PAL</u> for some suggested resources. • Organise for families collect student who prefer to be home with parents upon receiving the news. 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Follow up student attendance and absenteeism, ensuring an appropriate staff member is following with vulnerable students and their parents/carers.	
Actions to inform and support other parents/carers	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and disseminate template email/letter to families Attach/include relevant factsheets and information about support. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Be You; Suicide in Schools – information for families</u> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>headspace: Understanding grief and loss – for friends and family</u> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Conversations Matter – Telling a child about suicide</u> 	
Other actions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Protect and gather the student's belongings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put a lock on the student's locker • inform the closest peers that the student's locker will be emptied • advise teachers that any of the student's possessions in their possession should be passed on to the IMT • confer with police before returning items to the bereaved family. 	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the student's name is removed from any automated communication systems including those for contacting parents/carers about a student's absence from school.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Liaise with community youth mental health services and neighbouring schools.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Manage media requests and social media content as necessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is available to principals via the Department's media unit 24/7 on (03) 8688 7776. • Media requests should be forwarded to the Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL). 	

Actions	Person responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure timely documentation of actions and tasks, including who is responsible for following up tasks identified.	

Follow-up actions:

Person responsible:

Date:

Time:

