

# Script to inform staff

This script has been informed by and is consistent with [Be You](#) resources and the Department's [Guide to Managing Trauma](#).

## Remember

Only refer to the death as a suicide if permission to do so has been granted by the bereaved family. If permission hasn't been given use 'sudden death' or 'tragic death'.

In the event the bereaved family do not consent to sharing the student's name, inform the school community that a student has died/died by suicide (where you have consent to refer to the cause of death).

Today our school was given the very sad news that **[name of student]** died/died by suicide.

This will understandably be a very difficult period of time for the family, close friends, school staff and all of us who knew **[insert student's name]**. We have spoken with his/her/their parents and offered them the heartfelt sympathy of our whole-school community as well as any support we are able to give.

It is expected that this news will likely impact us in different ways and it may take you some time to process news of **[insert student's name]** death. For this reason, if you cannot be in the classroom, please let **[insert name of staff member]** know and alternative arrangements will be made.

Prioritising your own mental health and wellbeing is paramount. In addition to enacting your personal support network, the following options are available:

- **Employee Assistance Program.** As an employee of the Department of Education and Training (DET) you and your immediate family members (18 years and older) can access professional, counselling and mental wellbeing support through the EAP. Confidential counselling is delivered virtually, by phone or face-to-face at a time that is convenient for you. Support is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. This service is fully funded by the Department. [Where possible arrange for onsite support to be available immediately following news of the death.] You will find the contact information for the EAP on the staff self-care sheet we are handing out.
- Staff wellbeing team **[insert names/contact details and times available]**.

Thoughtful and accurate communication about suicide is critical and some key messages the school would like you to use are:

- suicide is complex and not the result of one single factor
- don't talk about or refer to the method of suicide
- be mindful not to use language that glamorises the death or stigmatises suicide
- pair communication regarding suicide with messages that promote help-seeking
- encourage students to not contribute to the spread of rumours or gossip
- answer basic questions where appropriate and refer more complex questions and individual support needs to members of the school wellbeing team **[insert names]**.

If you have any concerns about any of our students, you must raise these concerns with a member of the wellbeing team as soon as possible **[insert best process for school]**.

Our school's incident management team (IMT) is working to coordinate the communication with all relevant parties and to identify the support that our school community requires in order to restore wellbeing and ensure safety of students and staff alike. Members of the IMT are:

- **[insert name]**
- **[insert name]**
- **[insert name]**

We will keep you informed as regularly as possible over the coming days as new information comes to light, and share any modifications to school routine, including the support available onsite. We intend to meet at the end of today so that we can provide you with an update.

Our priority now is to inform students of the death. We will be asking staff to assist us to do this via a pre-prepared script that we will be providing to you. If you have any concerns about doing this, please let **[insert name of staff member]** know and an alternative arrangement will be made.

Once again, I encourage you to prioritise your own mental health and wellbeing in light of this sad news. If you have concerns about a colleague please also let **[insert name of staff member]** know and appropriate support will be arranged.

Communication (email/letter) will also be sent to parents and carers informing them of the death and details of the support available to their child at school and externally in the community. This information is an important step to ensuring that families can play a proactive role in keeping their child safe and appropriately supported during this time.

If you are approached by someone outside the school to comment on the death, please refer them to **[insert name of staff member]** and refrain from sharing information regarding the incident.

