

# Email/letter to families

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 does 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).

Dear parent/guardian,

I am writing to you with some very sad news about a member of our school community. Today our school received the news that **[name of student if bereaved family have provided consent]** has died/died **[by suicide]**.

Our thoughts are with **[name of student]** family and friends. We have been in contact with his/her/their family and have offered them the heartfelt sympathy of our whole school community and offered to provide any support we can.

Over the coming days, you and your child may be affected in many ways. Every child will react in different ways. Some may cry and want to talk about the death; others will not want to speak about it. Their reaction may also change over time. This is all a normal part of grieving. If your child is already using the service of a mental health professional, you should ensure this information is passed on to them.

We encourage you to let your child know that you are aware of the death and that you are available to them at any time. Your child may want to ask questions and talk about the death.

Two important messages to share with your child are:

- we should all seek help if we don't feel okay or if we feel vulnerable or distressed
- they need to talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent or teacher, if they are worried about themselves or a friend.

Over the coming months, we will be concentrating on supporting our students and staff. Our focus is on restoring wellbeing and ensuring everyone's safety.

We know students are going to be affected in different ways and for varying periods of time. As well as support from the Department of Education and Training, our wellbeing team and other mental health professionals are available students and staff.

As part of restoring wellbeing, it is also important that we return to normal routines as soon as possible.

At this stage, we don't have any information about the funeral arrangements for **[insert name of student]**. Depending on the wishes of the family, we may provide more information about this when we can.

There may also be information about what has happened on social media. If you notice anything harmful, please let us know and contact the social media platform to have it removed.

If you have questions about the support available or information about your child's needs, please contact the staff named below. This will ensure you receive consistent and accurate information and that the support we offer your child is appropriate.

**[Insert staff members name/ contact details/ and times available]**

I have included/attached some information and helpful links to support you to have a safe conversation with your child about the death of a peer.

Yours sincerely

**[insert signature block]**



## Helpful links

If you are concerned about your child's wellbeing, or your own, there are a range of services and supports you can access. Your General Practitioner (GP) is also a good person to talk to about your concerns.

[headspace](#) or [ehespace](#) – professional online and phone mental health support services to young people aged 12–25 years old. For information about grief, see: [Dealing With Grief And Loss & The Effects on Mental Health](#)

[ReachOut](#) – an online mental health organisation for young people and parents/carers. For information about grief, see: [Grief and Loss](#)

[Beyond Blue](#) – information and support to help people achieve their best possible mental health. For information about grief, see: [Suicide and grief – Beyond Blue](#)

[Kids Helpline](#) – a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

[Free one-on-one counselling](#) – the Department's partnership with headspace allows Victorian Government secondary school students to access telephone and video counselling services.

[Lifeline](#) – 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention strategies.

[Parentline](#) – an anonymous and confidential phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old.

[Be You](#) – the national mental health in education initiative delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace. For information about grief, see: [Grief – Be You](#).



## Supporting resources about suicide

If the bereaved family has given permission to refer to the death as a suicide, a range of resources are available for parents/carers. Some suggestions that you could download and share include:

- Be You:
  - Grief: how young people respond to suicide
  - Suicide in schools: information for families
  - Supporting young people after a suicide
- Conversations Matter Community Resource [Those bereaved by suicide](#)

