

**Suicide  
Postvention  
Resources:**  
*Longer-term  
response*



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# Introduction

When a suicide occurs, the effect on families, young people and communities is immediate and traumatic. The impact on a school community is equally profound and staff often feel unprepared and uncertain about how to respond.

Schools must respond with considerable care to mitigate the serious implications for their community.

This resource offers evidence-based and practice-informed guidelines to inform decision-making and actions during the longer-term response to a suicide.

You can find more information in the Complete Toolkit, including scripts and templates. Your Be You Consultant can also provide onsite, phone or email support and guidance for your school.

While reading or referring to this resource, prioritise your wellbeing and seek support if needed. You can find a list of mental health services and support helplines [here](#).

# Action Checklist

The list below outlines the key actions that schools can undertake to respond to and recover from a death by suicide. Further detail about these actions is provided throughout the Complete Toolkit.

## Longer-term response

- Continue to support and monitor young people.
- Continue to support and monitor staff.
- Keep families, staff and young people informed about the school's ongoing response and recovery.
- Plan for important events and anniversaries.
- Implement recommendations from the critical incident review.
- Include the postvention plan in staff inductions.
- Continue to document all the school's postvention activities and actions.

## Continue to support and monitor young people

Young people who were identified as high risk will have received, or will still be receiving, support and monitoring in partnership with mental health professionals and families.

Review the list of those most impacted one to two months after the death, identifying if further intervention is needed for any of these young people and adding any newly identified young people to this list.

Ideally, schools should continue to monitor these young people for at least six months after a death and less intensely for one to two years.

### **Pay specific attention to identified students whose social support networks may change through:**

- a holiday period
- an exam period
- leaving the school or a change in schooling (such as a transition to work, further learning or a family move)
- decreased family support (such as through divorce)
- changes in friendship groups.

### **You might like to consider:**

- promoting general messaging about grief (for example, grief is an individual process and there's no right way to grieve)
- monitoring and following up frequent absentees or changes to students' attendance habits

- ensuring engaged external mental health professionals are informed about any updates or changes
- issuing reminders of the support options and services available within and outside the school.

If there have been further traumatic events or deaths impacting young people at your school, more proactive support options are required.

## Continue to support and monitor staff

### **Continue to:**

- monitor the need for additional staff in the school. This is particularly important if the school has been managing more than one suicide or critical incident.
- remind staff of the process and importance of passing the names of anyone (young person, colleague or other) they're concerned about to the ERT or wellbeing staff
- promote information about internal and external support options for staff
- provide information or Be You Fact Sheets to staff to increase their knowledge and confidence about, for example, identifying young people at risk, staff wellbeing or understanding suicide. Your Be You Consultant can facilitate staff information sessions on these topics and can recommend appropriate timing for these sessions.

- follow up with staff members who have been identified as vulnerable or at risk. This should be done by the nominated ERT member. Additional support options should be provided to these staff members. Consider whether different roles should be offered to these staff. Continued liaison with the relevant education body is important to quickly facilitate this kind of support.

**ERT members should also check in with each other and access support if necessary.**

The responsibility for managing critical incident response and supporting school recovery can be challenging. It's important to prioritise your own mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Keep everyone informed

**Regular and relevant communication is just as important in the long term as it is initially.**

Advice about anniversaries of the death, media coverage or any other forms of potential stress will help to protect the wellbeing of the school community and reinforce a consistent and supportive approach of the ERT.

A limited group of staff, young people and families may also need to be kept informed of police processes, inquests and legal proceedings. Be aware that these events have the potential to create high levels of stress.

## Plan for important events and anniversaries

The anniversary of a death or the birthday of someone who has died – regardless of the cause of death – can take friends and family members back to their initial experience of mourning. Being aware of this and preparing for these times is a long-term postvention responsibility.

Young people may wish to do something to commemorate anniversaries and honour the person who died. These occasions should be commemorated in small groups. The families of young people participating in the commemorations should be made aware of the activity. An adult should provide supervision and monitor distress and safety. Discourage large group memorials. Schools aren't expected to arrange these occasions, but you can provide information and recommendations to families.

## Implement recommendations from the critical incident review

**Begin to plan and implement any recommendations agreed on after the critical incident review.**

Additionally, use any learnings from the critical incident review to inform a review of or the development of the school's postvention plan.

This has the added benefit of helping everyone appreciate the positive work of the school community.



## Include the postvention plan in staff inductions

**All new staff, including teaching, non-teaching, and volunteers, should be made aware of your school's postvention plan.**

In particular, teaching staff must be made familiar with the school's support processes for at-risk students, as well as your referral pathways and relationships with mental health professionals.

Nominate a member of the ERT to whom new staff can direct queries about the school's postvention work.

## Ongoing postvention activities

**Review and update your postvention plan at regular intervals to maintain relevancy.**

This also provides an opportunity for ERT staff to re-familiarise themselves with postvention roles and responsibilities.

Ideally, ERT meetings should be held when needed until the affected population of young people have completed their schooling.

This may vary depending on the needs of your school.