

**Lake Superior School District Procedures for
Responding to a Death of a
Student, Faculty, or School Community Member**

In the event of a death all stakeholders will respond with compassion, sensitivity, and responsibility, and adhere to the following guidelines established:

1. Selected LSSD superintendent or administrator will personally contact the family of the deceased to convey condolences, to understand the family's wishes for the specific communication to students regarding their child's demise, and to obtain information regarding services/funeral arrangements
2. The administration will inform the school community of the death of a student by one or several of the following means, AFTER, receiving permission from the parent:
 - Public Announcement with a moment of silence
 - Email to school staff and community
 - Written statement delivered to every classroom and read by the teacher
 - Letter to the school community with resources for grief reactions and counseling support
 - If the student death occurs during the summer or a school break, a communication will be sent to the school community
3. It is strongly advised that funerals or services for the deceased not be held on school grounds, to enable the school to focus on maintaining its regular schedule, structure, and routine; however, a member of the administration staff or staff designee will be in attendance at the funeral/service.
4. Grieving and emotionally impacted students and school staff will have ample opportunity to access counseling support services on campus. Students will be allowed to grieve in established areas on campus, with school support personnel, for a designated period of time; class absences will be excused with written permission. Teacher/administrator discretion may allow for adjustments to significantly impacted students' workload, class expectations, etc, and will be addressed on an individual basis.
5. In accordance with parent wishes, at the time of the deceased student's anticipated time of graduation, the following may occur:
 - The student's name, "in memoriam," will be alphabetically placed in the graduation program;
 - The student's family will be personally invited to the graduation by the principal and given their child's diploma and other mementos;

- At graduation, the administrator will acknowledge the loss of the student in his/her graduation address;
- Student speakers selected to speak at graduation, with administrator permission, may choose to incorporate comments and/or reflections regarding the school community member who has died.

The above LSSD policy is the standard and minimum that will uniformly be adhered to when the tragic loss of a school community member occurs. Additional tributes, memorials, and specific recognition will be considered dependent upon the individual, the circumstances, wishes of the family, and the LSSD Campus Memorials Policy.

LSSD will act with sensitivity, respect, and profound sense of responsibility toward the family of the deceased.

Guidelines for school Memorials following a tragic event:

1. No permanent memorials will be placed on school property. Temporary memorials should be allowed but removed as soon as possible (a week is recommended).
2. Recommendations and grief research suggest:
 - Do not dismiss school or encourage funeral attendance during school hours.
 - Do not dedicate a Memorial to the deceased.
 - Do not have large school assemblies.
 - Give facts to students with the deceased parent's permission.
 - Provide activities to reduce trauma; art, music, writing.
 - Set aside school **curriculum** as needed.
3. Always consult with the family about temporary memorials with the understanding they will eventually receive these;
4. Solicit ideas to memorialize the deceased in positive ways that do not put other students at risk or contribute to the emotional crisis. Always consult with the deceased family prior to initiating permanent Memorials. An example of a permanent Memorial is often termed as "A GIFT OF HOPE" which refers to activities or projects that will make a difference and prevent similar tragedies. These are not necessarily initiated by the school but ideas for students, parents of the deceased, community members, clergy, etc.:
 - Encourage students to engage in service projects, such as organizing a community service day, food drive, get involved in peer counseling, sponsor a health awareness day, etc;

- Encourage students to donate to the library or a scholarship fund in memory of the deceased;
- Try to move students from a role of “victim” to the role of “do-ers.”

5. In the case of a suicide, it is very important that schools strive to treat all deaths in the same way. Having one approach for memorializing a student who died of cancer or in a car accident and a different approach for a student who died by suicide, reinforces stigma and may be deeply and unfairly painful to the student’s family and friends. Nevertheless, because adolescents are especially vulnerable to the risk of suicide contagion, it is equally important to memorialize the student in a way that doesn’t inadvertently glamorize or romanticize either the student or the death. School can do this by:

- Seeking opportunities to emphasize the connection between suicide and underlying mental health issues such as depression or anxiety that can cause substantial psychological pain, but may not be apparent to others;
- Emphasize that there are always options to suicide;
- Encourage students to talk with staff if they are concerned about a friend