

FERNDALE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: OPERATIONS

TITLE: UNTIMELY DEATH

ADOPTED: OCTOBER 20, 2010

REVISED:

	<p style="text-align: center;">819.1 UNTIMELY DEATH</p> <p>The Board recognizes that untimely deaths of students and staff occur. To respond appropriately to the emotional needs of the bereaved, the students, the staff, and the community, administrative regulations and guidelines are established.</p> <p>In each case of untimely death, the district personnel shall strive to be responsive based on the circumstances and ability to respond.</p> <p>1. Personnel</p> <p>A. <u>Superintendent</u> or designee shall be responsible for the initial training, any additional in-service, and district-wide coordinating of Response Team (RT) members. The Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for the development and revision of the information concerning untimely death.</p> <p>B. <u>Building Principal</u> – Each building principal or designee shall identify and supervise a Response Team and establish a volunteer network of Response Team Associates (RTA). The principal shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy and shall serve as the spokesperson and decision-maker during sudden death intervention.</p> <p>C. <u>Response Team (RT)</u> – A Response Team will be established at each building that will consist of guidance counselor(s), Student Assistance Program (SAP) members, Family Support Team (FST) members, the school nurse, the school psychologist, and others selected by the principal. The RT shall serve as a resource to the building principal.</p> <p>D. <u>Response Team Associates (RTA)</u> – The RTA shall include local mental health providers. These individuals shall be a resource to be called upon to assist students and staff according to need as determined by the Response Team.</p>
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2. Training

- A. Each Response Team member shall receive a copy of this policy and basic training to deal with untimely death.
- B. Response Team Associates shall be given a copy of this policy and pertinent information regarding untimely death.
- C. All district employees shall receive instruction on the details of this policy along with pertinent information regarding untimely death.

3. Response to Student or Staff Death

A. Initial Day

- 1. The principal shall be notified immediately in the event of untimely death. Following this notification, the principal shall:
 - a. Verify that an untimely death has occurred.
 - b. Notify the Superintendent or designee and the principal in other school buildings that an untimely death has occurred.
 - c. Convene a meeting of the Response Team prior to the start of school.
 - d. Inform the staff, as soon as possible of the untimely death, the RT's role in assisting staff and students, and the procedures contained in the district policy.
 - e. Determine the need to provide substitutes to relieve or replace staff as needed.
 - f. Attempt to operate the school on as normal a schedule as possible.
 - g. Serve as a liaison to the press to receive information and requests from the press and to notify the press that students are not to be approached on school grounds or at school functions, provided, however, the Superintendent shall be the sole District Spokesperson to and with the media.
 - h. Schedule a faculty meeting.

2. The Response Team shall meet to:
 - a. Determine the method to notify the most affected students and staff. The RT shall list specific friends/individuals who shall be identified for very small group or individual notification. The individuals shall be called to a designated area and be informed by the principal or assigned RT member(s). If determined appropriate, the Response Team shall prepare a written statement to be shared with students and staff.
 - b. Determine the time and method of informing the student body. Students shall be informed by class or grade level rather than by using the public address system.
 - c. Evaluate the need for a written note to be carried home by the students conveying that a death has occurred and providing pertinent information.
 - d. Determine the support that can be provided by the district staff, and the need for assistance of outside providers. Then ascertain the need to involve Response Team Associates. Decide who will be contacted and our expectations of those individuals.
 - e. Establish times and locations for RT/RTA to provide support to students and staff.
3. The Staff shall:
 - a. Be informed of the untimely death. Be asked to review their untimely death policy/procedures. Extra copies will be available. Where possible, have this policy reviewed with them by the principal.
 - b. Be informed about the availability of the RT.
 - c. Be able to seek RT assistance or be excused from school.
 - d. Be encouraged to refer students they are concerned about to the RT.
 - e. Assist the RT by encouraging students to visit the RT.

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. The Students shall:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Be informed of the untimely death.b. Be informed of the availability of the Response Team and their role, along with the assurance that they will be excused from class to talk with RT members.c. Not be permitted to leave the school before dismissal, unless the school has assurance that the students will be under the direct care of their parents or guardians. Only parent or individual designated on the emergency card may pick up and remove the student.5. A Response Team Follow-up meeting shall be held either prior to the end of the school day or at a time to be determined by the principal in order to:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Share concerns about specific individuals and determine how to further support those students or staff. In some cases, parents may need to be notified of the school's concern regarding these students.b. Discuss how the school shall handle the funeral arrangements.c. Discuss any special concerns or circumstances including the possibility of "suicide clustering".d. Plan RT/RTA activities for the following day.6. At a faculty meeting the staff shall:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Share common concerns, questions, suggestions, reflections, and recommendations.b. Learn any additional information about the untimely death and funeral arrangements.c. Further identify individuals who may need additional support or monitoring.d. Assess the response to and need for RT/RTA services.e. Plan for the succeeding day. |
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B. Succeeding Days

1. The principal shall:
 - a. Ensure that the school routine is followed as much as possible.
 - b. Hold faculty meetings, as needed, to convey any additional information that the staff needs to know and any unforeseen problems encountered.
 - c. Allow all students who provide proof of parental or guardian consent and all staff who wish to attend the funeral or memorial service to do so. The RT/RTA should be prepared to guide students who may be unfamiliar with appropriate conduct and/or dress for funeral-related rituals.
 - d. Determine impact and if needed arrange for substitutes or utilize other creative measures to deal with the absence of large numbers of staff members.
2. The Response Team shall meet as needed to:
 - a. Decide on the need for any outside referrals including mental health referrals for specific students or staff.
 - b. Continue to assess the need for RT/RTA services and make arrangements as needed.
 - c. Decide on the advisability of a meeting to help parents learn more about how they can support their children, identify signs of stress or depression, and inform them of mental health referral sources.
 - d. Formulate plans in response to circumstances as they arise.

C. Liaison with the Bereaved Family

1. The principal shall designate one or more volunteer RT members (preferably those who knew the deceased or know the family and may include the principal) to be liaisons between the school and the family. Liaisons shall:
 - a. Provide support and comfort to the family.

- b. Dialogue with the family about how the school is responding to the untimely death.
- c. Listen to and forward requests the family may have of the school and notify the family of the school's memorial policy.
- d. Inform the family that information they provide will be shared with the school staff, but that if they feel any information needs to be confidential, that confidence will be kept. It is the family's responsibility to indicate any information that should be kept confidential.
- e. Communicate with others who will provide support to the bereaved family.
- f. Advise RT/RTA and staff about information they can share that will assist students.

4. Death of a Family Member of a Student (Parent or Sibling)

A. Initial Day

1. The principal shall be notified immediately in the event of the untimely death of the parent/sibling of a student. Following this notification the Principal shall:
 - a. Verify that an untimely death has occurred. Notify the superintendent and principals in other school buildings.
 - b. Convene a meeting of the Response Team.
 - c. Operate the school on a normal schedule.
2. The Response Team shall:
 - a. Determine the method to notify the most affected students and staff. This population should be identified in conjunction with the family of the deceased. These students/staff shall be notified in a designated area by a member or members of the RT via a prepared statement developed by the RT. The number of classes/students notified will vary depending upon family wishes and perceived need. RT members provide ongoing support to these individuals.

- b. Provide a volunteer RT member to be designated by the Principal to serve as a school liaison to the family. This individual will explain the school policy and guidelines to the family and ask that s/he be the contact person for the family to share funeral arrangements, etc. Portions of the policy may need to be modified based on the desires of the family.

B. Succeeding Days

1. The Response Team shall:

- a. Determine the need to provide ongoing support to students and staff as needed.
- b. With family consent, consider sending a letter home with designated students in the grade/building where the student has lost the parent/sibling, providing information about student attendance at funeral/memorial service(s), offering mental health suggestions to parents/guardians, and indicating that RT members are available for support/consultation.

2. The Principal shall:

- a. Make decision regarding who can attend service during the school day.
- b. Communicate with staff, keeping them informed as needed.

3. The Liaison shall consult with the family, focusing on the bereaved student's needs and re-integration to school.