

Suicide: How prepared is your school?

be
Suicide
Prevention
Resources

When a suicide occurs in a school community it's important to have a coordinated and planned response.

This can help minimise the effects of the difficult and traumatic event. It will help students, staff and the school community return to a normal routine as soon as possible.

Your school can use this document to complement existing school emergency management response policies or plans.

Emergency Response Team

The first step is assigning an Emergency Response Team (ERT) of 5 or 6 staff members. It's important not to have a really large number of people in your ERT, as this can be difficult to manage when you are responding to an emergency. Some staff members may have roles and tasks but may not need to be involved in the ERT.

This team shares the responsibility of preparing for, and responding to, an emergency incident such as a suicide.

Your school may have already created a team to manage emergency situations. It may be worth assessing whether the most appropriate staff

members to manage a suicide are part of this team. Depending on the resources of the school, some ERTs may also include employees from external agencies, such as a local mental health service.

Select ERT members thoughtfully, based on their experience, suitability and skill level.

You might like to include the principal and other senior staff, school wellbeing staff, year level coordinators or pastoral care staff. Consider selecting back-up ERT members in case core members are unavailable.

What does the ERT do?

Here are some suggestions for roles you might like to assign in the ERT.

ERT leader

This role is typically suited to the school principal or a senior staff member. The ERT leader coordinates the school response. It's their role to inform staff of the suicide, chair staff meetings and supervise the critical incident review. The leader should be made aware of all activities occurring in relation to the response to ensure coordination and efficiency.



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Family, police and social media liaison

The person assigned to this role should ideally have an existing relationship with the family and be confident helping them navigate social media. It may not be possible to assign this role prior to an incident.

Mental health services liaison

This role also helps to identify vulnerable staff and students and may be best suited to a wellbeing staff member.

School authority liaison and mainstream media contact

This role may be suited to a senior staff member who has an existing relationship with the local education authority. It should be limited to one person.

Communications manager

This role prepares written information for students, staff, parents and the local community and is the main contact for parents and community members.

How can Be You help?

Contact your Be You Consultant to discuss postvention planning for your school. The Be You team can support you by providing a free postvention planning workshop. This will equip you with a tailored postvention response plan.

Further information and resources

Be You has a range of resources to help you manage issues related to suicide. Please see:

- ✓ Be You Suicide Postvention: Complete Toolkit
- ✓ Managing language and consent about using the word 'suicide'
- ✓ Media and social media

Bibliography

Visit [Suicide: How prepared is your school?](#) for a list of references for this Fact Sheet.

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