



WHEN PARENTS RESIST SUICIDE LABEL

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT TO IDAHO SCHOOL RESPONSE PROTOCOLS TO SUICIDE OR OTHER SUDDEN DEATH

Upon Hearing of the Death

Upon hearing from the parents of the deceased, and after empathizing and listening to them, ask the parents whether you may let staff, students, and other parents know this death was a suicide. Let them know the school's notification letters or emails will use the deceased's name. Allow the parents to decline using the deceased's name.

Explanations for Parents Resistant to Labeling a Suicide

If the deceased's parents are resistant to allowing the school to say the death was a suicide, you might share that talking about suicide openly may help other vulnerable students. Also, let the deceased's parents know that students are likely to talk about the death as a suicide, and it may already be on social media.

If the parents do not want the death labeled a suicide, give staff the script with language stating the cause of death is not yet determined but that since the students brought up suicide, staff will ask students how they can get help for themselves or a friend who is struggling.

Let the deceased's parents know you understand their choice not to have the death labeled as suicide and the school will honor their request within the limits, as the school has a responsibility to keep all students safe.

Let the deceased's parents know the school must alert families after any death in the school so other parents can be aware of possible changes in their own students' behavior and to help with their grief response.

Instructions for Teachers When Parents Resist

When the deceased's parents do not want the death shared as a suicide, alert teachers that if suicide is mentioned by students in class to say, "We are not calling this a suicide yet. But since you brought this up, let's talk about suicide for a minute. Who would you tell if you were worried about someone or yourself?"

Teachers need to share:

1. There is no code of silence around suicide
2. That having suicidal thoughts is not uncommon – but suicide is very rare
3. That we have people to help when the brain gets into this thinking
4. Just like having any other illness, there are skilled people to help

Teachers should emphasize:

1. They are there for their students
2. How to access help at school
3. The 988 Idaho Crisis and Suicide Hotline number, which students can call any time anonymously. (Schools can request hotline cards for every student in your school.)

Teachers also might ask students what healthy activities or people help them when they feel stressed and list these ideas on the white board.

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