

# Being prepared: a part of suicide postvention

## Site leader 'placemat' to prepare support for Aboriginal students and staff

If a sudden death happens, it helps to know who will do what.  
Fill in this document as a way to prepare.  
Think about who will do each action. Record their names.

### Site leader responsibilities

In this 'placemat' the site leader will assign roles to specific people. However, the site leader is responsible for making sure it happens.

### Before you start:

- Confirm the student's death. Make sure the information you have is correct.
- Discuss local cultural protocols. Talk to relevant Elders or community members.
- Think about any students working or learning at home. Talk to SWISS about how your school can best approach this.
- Consider the psychological wellbeing of your staff. Think about who will be most impacted. Call Employee Psychology Services on **08 8226 0744**.



Remember, you can access the full suicide response and postvention guidelines by visiting:

**[education.sa.gov.au/suicide-response](https://education.sa.gov.au/suicide-response)**



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## Inform

Staff	Who will do it?
Inform your Education Director. They will inform the Director, Incident Management Division (08 8226 1840).	
Call Employee Psychology Services on 08 8226 0744 to discuss psychological support for staff as soon as possible.	
Convene your school's emergency response team. Confirm each person's tasks. Choose the best person to inform Aboriginal Staff.	
Inform Aboriginal staff in a separate space. Respect and remember community connections.	
Let non-Aboriginal staff know as soon as possible. Keep them updated with relevant details about the student's death. Let them know about the response plan. Think about any staff on leave and regular relief teachers. Remember your volunteers too.	
Let staff know they can choose to <b>not</b> be involved.	
Talk about a strategy to make sure there is ongoing individual support.	
Students	Who will do it?
Call SWISS on 08 8314 4100. SWISS are the department's Social Work Incident Support Service.	
Check and follow local Aboriginal cultural protocols, when appropriate.	
For close friends and vulnerable students, let them know one-on-one. Be a source of immediate and ongoing support.	
Find a way for Aboriginal students to come together. Let them know in a group. Some Aboriginal students might want to stay with their classmates, instead of going to the group. Find ways to respect this.	
Let students know in small groups. Use the agreed student script. Think about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friends closest to the student</li> <li>• students in the same year level</li> <li>• students in the same class as a sibling.</li> </ul>	
Do <b>not</b> hold whole school assemblies for this purpose. Home group or small year level group is preferred. This might not be possible in very small schools.	
Identify and check in with vulnerable students. For example, anyone with their own grief, loss or mental health issues.	
Find ways to inform students who are absent or off-site. For example, FLO students. Make sure they are not alone.	
Other families	Who will do it?
Check and follow local protocols.	
Inform the families of close friends and vulnerable students. This helps make sure there is support at home.	
Let families know by letter or email. Use the agreed letter template. Using this will help you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give immediate and accurate information</li> <li>• talk about your school's response to the incident</li> <li>• share details about services for families and their children</li> <li>• explain how to respond to a sudden death.</li> </ul>	
Community	Who will do it?
Follow your community's local cultural protocols.	
If appropriate and needed, inform the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• principal of any schools attended by the student's siblings.</li> <li>• chairperson of the governing council, if appropriate.</li> <li>• principal at any schools previously attended.</li> </ul>	

## Support

Staff	Who will do it?
Make sure Aboriginal staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know what's happening</li> <li>• feel supported</li> <li>• can connect with each other.</li> </ul>	
Let staff know you have arranged for psychological support and whether the support will be on site or over the phone.	
Share the details about information being given to families and students.	
Give staff the script to inform students. Offer them support to talk to the students, if needed.	
Check in with staff at the start and end of the day. Ask about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their wellbeing</li> <li>• consistent messaging</li> <li>• any issues arising.</li> </ul>	
Check in with and support temporary relief teachers and volunteers.	
Students	Who will do it?
Immediately follow up on all unexplained student absences. Do this every day.	
Work collaboratively with SWISS to identify, monitor and plan support for vulnerable students.	
Set up an Aboriginal student support room. Make sure the appropriate staff are available to help.	
Plan for students who need to go home due to distress. Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that students cannot go home to an empty house</li> <li>• to supervise students until family or carers pick them up.</li> </ul>	
Set aside rooms for the department social worker and the clinician who will provide psychological support for employees.	
Family of the student	Who will do it?
Set up a line of support and communication with the student's family, if appropriate.	
Collect and protect the student's belongings.	

## Manage

Next steps	Who will do it?
Liase with the local Aboriginal Community Education team leader.	
Document the incident and all actions.	
Submit an IRMS report (within 24 hours).	
Organise a meeting with key stakeholders to develop a plan for the future.	
Media and social media	Who will do it?
Ask staff and students to avoid making public comments.	
Discuss appropriate use of social media with students and families. Use agreed social media scripts.	
Think about using the site's social media network to share help-seeking information.	
Respond to inappropriate postings by asking the student to remove or change the post.	
The Education Director will inform the department's Media Liaison Officer (08 8226 7990).	
Staff and student support	Who will do it?
Keep a check on the wellbeing of Aboriginal staff and students in the support room.	
Check in with all staff. Encourage self-care and their engagement with the psychological support organised.	

This placemat is for **Department for Education** site leaders. Catholic and Independent schools can use their current school placemat developed in collaboration with headspace Schools.