



Riverside Trauma Center postvention guidelines

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Information

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This document offers guidelines for schools, organizations, and communities to follow after a suicide occurs. Special attention is paid to balancing the needs for commemorating the deceased and preventing a possible contagion effect, as well as addressing trauma issues that may be present.

The *Riverside Trauma Center Postvention Protocols* provide communities and organizations with recommendations for how to respond to suicide deaths in a way that can help restore functioning to the organization, facilitate the grieving process, and decrease the risk of suicide imitation (contagion effect). Among other topics, the Protocols address the following postvention tasks:

1. Verification of death and cause
2. Coordination of external and internal resources
3. Dissemination of information
4. Support for those most impacted by the death
5. Identification of those at risk and prevention of contagion
6. Commemoration of the deceased

7. Psychoeducation on grieving, depression, PTSD, and suicide
8. Screening for depression and suicidality
9. Provision of services if one or more additional suicides occur
10. Linkage to resources
11. Evaluation and review of lessons learned
12. Development of a system-wide prevention plan

The *Protocols* summarize generally accepted recommendations for postvention services. The recommendations were developed by the directors of the Riverside Trauma Center, based on the practice literature on postvention services, the guidelines for safe messaging for suicide prevention, and the Riverside Trauma Center team's experience providing postvention services in Massachusetts. Riverside collects data from postvention services conducted at schools and uses feedback from students and results of screenings to inform the *Protocols*.

Objectives:

Administrators and others who use the Protocols will have greater knowledge of how to:



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1. Promote healthy grieving by educating community and organization members about the grieving process.
2. Help community and organization leaders determine a safe way to commemorate the deceased within the year following the suicide death.
3. Reduce the risk of further suicide in communities and organizations by increasing knowledge about psychiatric disorders, risk and protective factors, and mental health resources.

Implementation Essential:

- In the aftermath of a suicide, it is important that community and organization leaders collaborate with service providers and others to develop a coordinated response.

Links within this resource

[1] <http://traumacenter.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Postventionguidelines.pdf>

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