

SAMPLE DEATH NOTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR PARENTS

To be sent by e-mail or regular mail

OPTION 1: WHEN THE DEATH HAS BEEN RULED A SUICIDE

Dear Parents,

I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our students, _____ has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.

All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.

The cause of death was suicide. We want to take this opportunity to remind our community that suicide is a very complicated act. It is usually caused by a mental disorder such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes these disorders are not identified or noticed; other times, a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs. I am including some information that may be helpful to you in discussing suicide with your child.

Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the school office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of school and community mental health resources.

Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.

The school will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location]. Members of our Crisis Response Team [or mental health professionals] will be present to provide information about common reactions following a suicide and how adults can help youths cope. They will also provide information about suicide and mental illness in adolescents, including risk factors and warning signs of suicide, and will address attendees' questions and concerns.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the school counselors with any questions or concerns. Sincerely,
[Principal]

OPTION 2 - WHEN THE CAUSE OF DEATH IS UNCONFIRMED:

Dear Parents,

I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our students, _____ has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.

All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.

The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we have asked the students not to spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be hurtful and unfair to _____ as well as [his/her] family and friends. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.

Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the school office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of school and community mental health resources.

Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the school counselors with any questions or concerns. Sincerely,
[Principal]

ATTACHMENT 3.7

OPTION 3 - WHEN THE FAMILY HAS REQUESTED THAT THE CAUSE OF DEATH NOT BE DISCLOSED:

Dear Parents,

I am writing with great sadness to inform you that one of our students, _____ has died. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.

All of the students were given the news of the death by their teacher in [advisory/homeroom] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.

The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time. We are aware that there have been rumors that this was a suicide death. Since the subject has been raised, we want to take this opportunity to remind our community that suicide, when it does occur, is a very complicated act. It is usually caused by a mental disorder such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about the problems in his or her life and how to solve them. Sometimes these disorders are not identified or noticed; other times, a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs.

Members of our Crisis Response Team are available to meet with students individually and in groups today as well as over the coming days and weeks. Please contact the school office if you feel your child is in need of additional assistance; we have a list of additional school and community mental health resources.

Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or the school counselors with any questions or concerns. Sincerely,
[Principal]

From After a Suicide A Toolkit for Schools 2011, AFSP & SPRC