

SAMPLE DEATH NOTIFICATION STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS

Use in small groups such as homerooms or advisories, not in assemblies or over loudspeakers.

OPTION 1 - WHEN THE DEATH HAS BEEN RULED A SUICIDE:

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students, _____ has taken [his/her] own life. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

A suicide death presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors you may hear. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.

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; in other cases, a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs. One thing is certain: there are treatments that can help. Suicide should never, ever be an option.

Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction.

We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss and to enable us to understand more about suicide. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.

Please remember that we are all here for you.

OPTION 2 - WHEN THE CAUSE OF DEATH IS UNCONFIRMED:

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students, _____ has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

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 ask that you not spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply 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.

Each of us will react to _____'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known _____ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.

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

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students, __, has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time. 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 ask that you not spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply 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.

Since the subject has been raised, we do want to take this opportunity to remind you 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 his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes these disorders are not identified or noticed; in other cases a person with a disorder will show obvious symptoms or signs. One thing is certain: there are treatments that can help. Suicide should never, ever be an option.

Each of us will react to ___'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known ___ very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, just let your teachers know.

Please remember that we are all here for you.

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