

# Bereavement, Memorials, and Anniversaries: Developing a Recovery Annex for K-12 Schools

## READINESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOLS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Recovery is one of the five [National Preparedness System mission areas](#) and is a critical component of an education agency's preparedness. In the context of school emergency management planning, recovery refers to the capabilities necessary to assist schools affected by an event or emergency in restoring the learning environment. As outlined in the [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans \(School Guide\)](#), a high-quality school emergency operations plan (EOP) contains annexes for at least 10 emergency management functions (activities to be carried out before, during, and/or after more than one type of emergency). Recovery is one of the most common functions, as recovery efforts will take place after nearly every emergency event. Thus, a comprehensive EOP includes a [Recovery Annex](#) that outlines the school's approach to recovery before, during, and after a range of threats (adversarial and human-caused) and hazards (natural, technological, and biological).

Recovery is also one of the most complex emergency management functions. There are four types of recovery: academics recovery; business services recovery; physical and structural recovery; and health, social, emotional, and behavioral recovery; and three main time frames of recovery — immediate, short- and long-term. Health, social, emotional, and behavioral recovery is typically the longest-lasting type of recovery; it involves supporting the whole school community with coping and healing after an emergency incident, which often requires considerable time and resources. This is especially true when an

emergency incident results in the death of a student or staff member. While this scenario may be difficult to imagine, schools can take proactive steps to prepare for such a situation by developing a Recovery Annex that considers bereavement and memorial and anniversary activities within its focus on health, social, emotional, and behavioral recovery. This fact sheet offers information for core planning team members and safety leaders at K-12 schools and school districts on elements to include in the Recovery Annex that address and prepare the education agency for the loss of a member of the school community.

### Bereavement

[Bereavement](#) refers to an individual's experience after the death of someone in their life and is a common experience that many children will encounter before they finish high school. Children who are grieving can experience a range of thoughts and emotions — including sadness, anger, fear, guilt, and worry — that significantly impact their social, emotional, and behavioral well-being and mental health, as well as their ability to learn and participate in class. Educators and school staff may be impacted by the added stress of supporting children, coworkers, and families who are grieving in addition to their regular duties. As such, schools should be aware of the impacts of bereavement on the school community and plan for how they will manage bereavement that arises because of an emergency that results in the death of a student or staff member. Important considerations

for planning for bereavement include understanding its range of impact and incorporating strategies for addressing bereavement into the Recovery Annex.

## Coping With the Death of a Student or Staff Member

When an emergency incident results in the death of a student or staff member, the entire school community is impacted. The time immediately following the death will likely be marked by intense emotions and stress, increased communication with and involvement from the community, media inquiries, and potential conflict as members of the school community with differing perspectives offer input on how to move forward. For these reasons, protocols and procedures for addressing bereavement should be developed prior to an actual death in the school community. It is much more difficult to make serious and impactful decisions under stress, as one's judgement may be impacted by their emotional state or by pressure from within or outside the school community to respond quickly. Additionally, having a comprehensive Recovery Annex in place that addresses bereavement ensures that recovery activities can begin immediately following an incident — a crisis response team is established, school staff members are ready and trained to support students and themselves, and pre-established partnerships are in place with community mental health providers to supplement the school's mental health services.

## Range of Impact

Students' responses to loss will have different manifestations depending on several factors, including the age and developmental stage of the student, their current coping skills and available support systems, history of personal or school-related difficulties, and the student's relationship to the person who died. The degree to which the death impacts students and staff also differs depending on the situation, including whether the death is that of a staff member or student, the age of the student who died, the nature of the death, the time of year the death occurred (i.e., during summer break, at the end of the school year, during first semester), the location of the death (e.g., on campus or off campus), and the number of family



members of the victim, such as siblings, cousins, or children, who still attend the school.

Students' individual past experiences also impact how they will respond to death, particularly one caused by an emergency incident and/or one that affected someone they knew. Trauma is cumulative, so students with a prior history of [adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) may be differently or more intensely impacted by the death. ACEs are potentially traumatic events in a child's life; ACEs that schools may be aware of include divorce and custody disputes, loss of or separation from a caregiver or family member, refugee status, homelessness, and involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. For children who have experienced ACEs, the added potential trauma of losing a friend or teacher can compound its social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health impacts, resulting in [complex trauma](#). Schools should be aware that students with a prior history of ACEs may be at a higher risk for exhibiting symptoms of [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) and may need additional support in the aftermath of the death, particularly if it was sudden and/or caused by an emergency incident that impacted the school community. Similarly, staff members who have a prior history of trauma may also be more impacted by the event.

Students' responses to the death of a member of the school community can also affect their school experiences. In the aftermath of loss, students'

academic performance may decline, as skills such as focus, concentration, organization, and task initiation can become difficult when students are contending with traumatic memories, heightened stress, and strong emotions. Feelings of sadness, depression, or anxiety may result in social challenges among students or staff, such as isolation from peers or coworkers, disengagement with school activities, and for students, avoidance of class participation. Young students may become fearful of leaving family members, resulting in school avoidance and increased absenteeism. Students and staff members may also experience physical symptoms that impact engagement and may result in missed instructional time, such as headaches, stomachaches, or exhaustion due to restless sleep or nightmares. Behavioral changes may occur, such as an increase in mood changes or irritability, crying, heightened startle response or increased sensitivity to environmental stimuli, or increased risk-taking. For younger students this may result in an increase in classroom disruption or even bullying, while adolescents may struggle with substance misuse. The range of impact will be different for every student — short-term experiences for some students, while lasting longer for others. Providing both immediate short- and long-term [trauma-informed care](#) to grieving students and staff can support academic progress and social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health, and aid in the recovery of all members of the school community.

## Strategies for Addressing Grief

### Remove Personal Items in a Timely Manner

The empty chair, desk, and any personal items left at school belonging to a student who died can serve as a visual reminder of the loss to classmates and staff members, which can be painful and potentially trigger trauma responses among survivors. Schools should collect the student's personal belongings (i.e., items from lockers, classrooms, display cases, etc.) in a timely manner and arrange a location, such as the administrator's office, and a time, possibly outside school hours, for their return to parents and family members. Schools may also want to consider inviting a member of the crisis response team to be present to support families through this process. School core planning teams should draw upon the input of students

and staff on how to deal with permanent reminders in a manner that is respectful and meaningful to the school community.

### Talk With Students About the Loss

Teachers, [school psychologists](#), school counselors, school social workers, or other school staff members tasked with facilitating discussions on the loss should seek to understand students' emotions and behavior and be sensitive to a range of responses. Having teachers share the news and hold classroom discussions on the incident may be appropriate for younger children; however, older students may be more likely to have information about the event already and may be more interested in information on the school's response, such as memorials, opportunities for grieving, and the like. Reading a short, pre-written statement to students within small, naturally occurring groups, such as homeroom or first-period class, can be used for initial notification and to outline support services that will be provided. When discussing the death with students of all ages, teachers should be straightforward, brief, patient, and nonjudgmental. They should use clear language, avoid euphemisms about death, and provide an initial opportunity for students to talk and ask questions (remember that not all students will want to discuss the incident and should never be forced to do so). On an ongoing basis, teachers and school staff members should



monitor students' responses to the loss and make referrals to mental health services if students exhibit ongoing trauma response symptoms that significantly affect their well-being or interfere with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. As a best practice, teachers and school staff members should receive ongoing professional learning opportunities on trauma-informed care.

### **Provide Classroom Assistance**

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In addition to a pre-prepared message, the crisis response team should have plans in place to assist in message delivery to classrooms in which a teacher does not feel able to notify or comfortable notifying the class or facilitating a brief discussion. For K-8 classrooms of a student who has died, it may be helpful to assign [mental health personnel](#) to that class for the first few days or week following the incident. Extra support may also be needed in classrooms of siblings, cousins, or close friends of the student who died. Older students who are not assigned to a stationary classroom may benefit from having support staff and mental health personnel available in a designated room on campus that they can visit when needed. If the incident involved the death of a teacher, the school may consider assigning, at least for a couple of days, a teacher from the same or lower grade to the deceased teacher's class who is familiar with the students, or a staff member from the school crisis response team. Even if the incident does not involve the death of a teacher, it is often helpful to arrange for a few substitute teachers, if only to provide rotating coverage for teaching staff so that they can access their own support services during the school day.

### **Support Teachers and School Staff**

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After the death of a student or staff member, teachers and other school staff members typically offer support and compassion to students, in addition to maintaining all regular instructional duties — all while they are also grieving the loss of a student, child, or coworker. Exposure to others' distress and trauma can be challenging for school personnel to manage, especially when it is associated with their own experiences and is in tandem with their own grieving process. While working with those impacted by trauma and loss can be rewarding,

and many staff members can maintain resiliency after exposure to trauma and loss, school personnel are not immune to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue refers to the cumulative effects of exposure to traumatic stories or events in the work of helping others. Compassion fatigue can affect all aspects of a teacher or school staff member's life, and can interfere with their physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and professional well-being. Administrators should encourage and provide supports for the ongoing [self-care and resiliency](#) of school personnel and should not neglect to include additional supports and services for them in any policies related to bereavement.

### **Memorials**

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Memorials are items or activities established to honor and show remembrance for individuals who have died, or for events that resulted in casualties. Memorials provide a time or place for individuals to grieve and mourn, express emotions, and be supported by the school community. While memorials can serve a role in the healing process after a death of a student or staff member, some can also be retraumatizing or have unintended consequences if not developed carefully. In advance of an emergency incident, schools should establish thorough plans and policies for the creation of memorials that include the following considerations.



## Considerations for Erecting Permanent School Memorials

There is little agreement on whether permanent school memorials are appropriate to commemorate the death of a student or staff member or whether they will have relevant meaning or impact 10 to 20 years after an incident occurs. A decision to erect a permanent memorial requires intentional and thoughtful considerations not only for current students and school staff, but also the family of the victim(s), and even future students and staff members. While the decision to create a permanent memorial will vary based on the community and situation, schools can increase their preparedness and create plans for these types of decisions well in advance of any emergency incident.

### Suicide

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According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), permanent or long-term memorials should not be constructed to memorialize students or staff members who have died by suicide. Such memorials can unintentionally highlight, glamorize, or otherwise accentuate suicide, and can communicate that suicide is an appropriate or desired response to stress. Schools should be aware of the concept of suicide contagion, which refers to the process by which exposure to suicide causes an increase in suicidal ideation or behavior among others ([U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019](#)). Schools can reduce the risk of suicide contagion while simultaneously supporting students and staff members in honoring and remembering a student or staff member who died by suicide by instead establishing projects or activities that help the living. This could include volunteering, investing in a school-based suicide prevention program, or fundraising for a local charity or suicide prevention research.

### Retraumatization

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Erecting permanent memorials can also have the potential to retraumatize both students and staff who knew the victim, those who survived or were impacted by the incident, as well as families and possibly the surrounding community depending on the scope of the

incident and the location of the memorial. Memorials erected at the school will be a constant physical reminder of the victim, their death, and the incident, and may continue to trigger trauma responses in students and staff long after the incident took place. If the decision is made to construct a permanent memorial, it should not be placed at or near the entrance to the school, where there is a higher risk of retraumatization for school community members who pass it every day. Instead of constructing a permanent memorial on school grounds, schools may instead want to consider a community memorial that allows students and staff members the choice to visit it. As a best practice, teachers and school staff should be trained to identify signs of retraumatization among students and staff in the days, weeks, and months following the incident and offer resources, support services, or referrals to community-based mental health organizations as needed.

### Design

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The first step in constructing a permanent memorial is to form a memorial planning committee made up of school leader(s), school staff, families of the victim(s), students, and community members. The design of a permanent memorial should be informed by those most impacted by the incident and should be carefully planned. When designing a permanent memorial, it is important to consider how students and staff will perceive the incident and the death of the victim(s) in the future. It may be difficult for those planning the memorial, those who are acutely impacted, to see this perspective. The memorial design and planning process may also need to respond to political, community, or parental pressures. In general, the memorial should reflect remembrance but should not dramatize the incident and should be appropriate in scale and scope. Memorial planning committees should also consider equality when designing a memorial in remembrance of more than one victim. For example, if a tragedy resulted in multiple casualties, schools should not construct a large memorial for one student, then a small one for another student. Planning committees should work thoughtfully with victims' families to decide on an appropriate design and should be understanding that those impacted will likely be making these difficult decisions while they are mourning.

## Input From the School Community

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Students, staff, families, and members of the community should all be given the chance to be included on the planning committee so that all may have input on the location and design of the memorial. By including students in the planning process, schools can give students a say in how they choose to honor and remember the person who died. Some families may choose not to participate in larger planning meetings; schools should be respectful of these decisions. Instead, memorial planning committees can solicit families' opinions privately and individually and should do so for major decisions. While schools should carefully consider input from everyone on the planning committee, the ultimate decision must rest with those responsible for the school district's operations and maintenance tasks.

## Cultural Norms

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Planning committees should learn about and consider the cultural norms and religious perspectives of the victim's family and those impacted by the incident in all aspects of the memorial's planning, location, and design. School officials should acknowledge and be sensitive to these traditions and confer with those impacted to honor any cultural or religious customs.

## Time Commitment

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Schools should not underestimate the complexity and sensitive nature of the planning process; erecting a permanent memorial can take many years. For example, the planning and construction of the Columbine memorial took 8 years and involved the families of the victims, the survivors and their families, past and present students and staff, and community members. Similarly, the Sandy Hook permanent memorial took nearly 10 years to plan and build. If the decision has been made to construct a permanent memorial, planning committees should be aware of the potential for it to be a time-intensive process.

## Maintenance Resources

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Before a permanent memorial is constructed, it is also important to identify the resources needed to maintain the memorial. Permanent school memorials, such as gardens, monuments, benches, plaques, a reading area, special trees, walkways, walls, and



engraved tiles or bricks, will all require ongoing maintenance. Maintenance considerations include costs as well as any other resources needed to ensure the memorial's upkeep and/or restoration after vandalism. Schools should assess their capacity to maintain the memorial long-term and plan accordingly. For some districts, it may be more practical and less of a financial burden to establish an endowment for maintaining the memorial.

## Memorial Activities: An Alternative to Permanent Memorials

[Memorial activities](#) provide an opportunity for the school community to come together, support one another, and take meaningful action out of the grief and pain of the loss. In many cases, memorial activities are preferable to a permanent memorial and can be a contributor to the healing process. Activities symbolize that every student and staff member is important, that their contributions are valuable, and they help to unite and strengthen those impacted by the death(s). Memorial activities that bring people together can also help create a sense of hope, reduce feelings of isolation and vulnerability, and illustrate the universality of grief. Memorial activities can serve a larger purpose as well — to promote positive action toward a cause, such as tolerance, mental health services, or safety. Planning a variety of activities

offers students, staff members, and the community options for remembering the victim(s) and the incident in a way that feels appropriate for them. Options for memorial activities include but are not limited to

- Establishing a scholarship fund for graduating seniors or a foundation in the name of the victim(s);
- Allowing the public the option to support and give back to the school, such as through gifts like library books, instructional supplies, or equipment;
- Allowing students the option to write cards and letters or draw pictures for the victim's family (This should ultimately be the victim's family's decision, and school counseling staff should review students' written material or artwork before giving them to the family to ensure that all content is sensitive and appropriate.);
- Organizing a volunteer opportunity for students or staff members (Schools can solicit students' ideas for volunteer activities as well.);
- Organizing a memorial walk or run;
- Holding a moment of silence to mark the event;
- Commemorating the student(s) or staff who died at the high school graduation;
- Holding a memorial service or candlelight vigil; or
- Organizing a donation drive for an existing foundation or helpful cause supported by the victim, related to the manner of death, or related to preventing another incident like the one that occurred (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, American Cancer Society, etc.).

Students, staff members, or the community may suggest creating a tribute page to the victim(s) in the school yearbook or newspaper. This should be carefully considered and depend on the situation. Tribute pages should not glorify the cause of the death. This is particularly true in the case of a suicide or a death due to risky behavior such as speeding or drinking and driving.

Planning considerations for memorial activities are similar to those for designing permanent memorials and include forming a planning committee; identifying resources needed to conduct the activity (this includes funds, time, materials, etc.); understanding the potential for retraumatization and having mental

health personnel available; being sensitive to culturally specific traditions, beliefs, activities, and practices; and taking time to plan all aspects of the activity carefully, while considering how each may be perceived by the community and those impacted. Schools conducting memorial activities may also want to consider adding the option for students, staff, or community members to participate or attend virtually.

## Holding a Memorial Service

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It can be appropriate to hold a memorial service at the school to commemorate the loss of a student or staff member. For example, in some communities the school is the only venue large enough to accommodate memorial attendees. In other circumstances, such as when a teacher or administrator dies, the staff, students, and community may want to sponsor a memorial service at the school because that is where the individual is most remembered. If schools decide to hold a memorial service, it is recommended that the service be held after school hours. If held during the school day, attendance at such a service should always be voluntary. The National Association of School Psychologists offers these guidelines for when a memorial service is held at school:

- Involve students in the planning of the service, particularly those who were close to the person who died;
- Include music, particularly student performances (Playing soothing music as people enter sets the mood and maintains calm.);
- Preview the service with students beforehand and have mental health personnel available in case any students are retraumatized or become overwhelmed during the service;
- Ensure there is adequate supervision at the service, and remove anyone from the service who is acting inappropriately;
- Limit the memorial service to 30 minutes for secondary students;
- Include several speakers, or if students have written poems or other tributes, students themselves or staff members can read them (it is useful for students to practice their readings before the actual event);

- Invite family members but recognize that they may choose not to attend;
- Use symbols of life and hope (Balloons or candles can be used effectively to promote a positive, uplifting message that acknowledges the sadness yet is hopeful for the future.);
- Provide a quiet activity for students who do not attend or allow students whose parents do not want them to attend to be picked up from school prior to the service;
- Have students return to their classrooms for a short time after the service (This allows them the opportunity to talk with one another or talk with their teacher or a counselor, if available.); and

Limit media coverage on school grounds during a service (note that specific details on [working with the media](#) after an emergency incident should be documented in the [Communications and Warning Annex](#).)

## Funerals

Students or staff members may wish to attend the funeral of a fellow student or coworker and may benefit from doing so. Schools could communicate with the victim’s family to understand their wishes about the attendance of students and staff, as well as the time and location of the service. If a funeral is planned during school hours and it is likely that many students or staff will attend, schools could explore with the family the option of offering visitation hours or an additional, smaller memorial service outside of school hours.

## Spontaneous Memorials

Spontaneous or temporary memorials are often established quickly or even immediately after the death of a student or staff member, as the community seeks to find solace and show support to those impacted. For example, a school fence or wall may be filled with flowers, posters, balloons, plants, teddy bears, candles, photos, or other mementos in the immediate aftermath of an emergency incident. While spontaneous memorials often play an important role in a community’s healing and recovery, they require specific considerations as well. Spontaneous memorials should be monitored to ensure safety (e.g.,



separating candles from flammable materials) and to remove inappropriate messages, items, or trash. Monitoring those who visit the spontaneous memorial may also be a consideration, as schools may experience a convergence of large groups of visitors and media representatives at the site.

For all spontaneous memorials on school grounds, school leaders must determine how and when to manage, and ultimately, remove the items. Before providing guidance to the school community around the construction or removal of spontaneous memorials, school leaders should involve both students and staff members in the decision-making process. Spontaneous memorials often become important gathering sites that play an immediate role in the grieving and subsequent healing process of the community; schools should avoid removing the items in a sudden or unexpected way, as this can create feelings of anger and resentment. When possible, a positive atmosphere should be created before and during the removal of the items, such as through a celebration of life or other activity that honors those who died. The timing of the removal should be considered carefully as well. For example, a natural break in the school calendar if possible, such as a weekend, vacation, or holiday, could be an appropriate time to remove the items. In



general, it is not recommended that spontaneous or temporary memorials be left up past the school year in which the death occurred.

## Anniversaries

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An anniversary is the date on which an event took place in a previous year. [Commemorating anniversaries](#) can provide the community an opportunity to remember those lost in the incident, honor survivors, and recognize organizations and community members who helped during the tragedy. Commemorating anniversaries can also contribute to long-term recovery, as survivors and those impacted experience a renewal of remembrance and support from the community. For example, upon the first anniversary of an emergency incident in one school, the school district, in conjunction with the city, the parks and recreation department, and a faith-based organization, sponsored a memorial gathering at the school. Although anniversary activities must be thoughtfully planned and tailored for each community and incident, general guidelines include but are not limited to the following:



- Be sure to involve students, faculty, and community members (particularly those impacted by the incident) in the planning of any event or activity that takes place on the anniversary;
- Hold visiting hours at the remembrance site, a wide time frame for remembrance activities, or the option of virtual attendance and participation, to provide survivors, their families, and community members the choice to attend and remember the incident on their own terms;
- Plan an organized program in collaboration with community partners. It can be particularly impactful to include and recognize first responders who were present at the time of the incident in the anniversary;
- Work with the media in advance of the anniversary to establish guidelines for interviewing selected school personnel and community members, and for limiting access to students and families;
- Work with partners, such as local law enforcement, to provide additional security at any remembrance site or activity held during the day, especially those that involve a large number of attendees;
- Conduct school on the anniversary date and possibly acknowledge the event through a moment of silence;
- Be sensitive to the school and community's response on the first-year anniversary and understand that some students, families, or community members may not want to be involved in reliving the incident;
- Consider holding a debrief session before the anniversary to discuss the incident and its impact on the school community with any new staff members who were not present at the time of the original incident;
- Consider providing additional professional learning opportunities on trauma and retraumatization in advance of the anniversary for teachers who have surviving students or family members of students who died in the incident in their class; and

- Monitor students' responses throughout the day of the anniversary and in the following days and provide additional counseling support. Both the date itself and any remembrance activities can retrigger trauma responses for students and staff members, particularly those who survived the incident.

While the anniversary may be honored at a community event rather than at the school, communities may still want to involve the school in remembrance events or activities if the school played an important role in the response or recovery to a community-based incident, such as serving as a shelter or meeting place for recovery groups. However, it is always the school's choice whether to participate in these activities.

## Recovery Annex Development

Effective [immediate, short- and long-term recovery](#) from an emergency incident requires consistent, collaborative planning efforts that should be undertaken in advance of any emergency and should be well outlined in the school EOP. The [School Guide](#) recommends a [six-step planning process](#) for developing an EOP, reviewing an EOP, or periodically reviewing portions of an EOP. This six-step planning process consists of forming a collaborative planning team; understanding the situation; determining goals and objectives; identifying courses of action; preparation, review, and approval of the EOP; and implementation and maintenance of the EOP. These six steps can also be used to create or revise a Recovery Annex. A comprehensive Recovery Annex will ideally contain goals (broad, general statements that indicate a desired outcome), objectives (specific, measurable actions that are necessary to achieve the goals), and courses of action (specific procedures used to accomplish goals and objectives).

The health, social, emotional, and behavioral focus of the Recovery Annex concentrates on supporting the school community with coping and healing after an emergency incident, including those that involve the death of a student or staff member. In developing a Recovery Annex that sufficiently prepares a school for these types of recovery before, during, and after an emergency incident, schools should include plans, policies, and procedures for addressing bereavement,



memorials, and anniversaries. The following are relevant considerations to support schools and core planning teams with this work.

- **Identify bereavement courses of action for a range of responses after the loss of a student or staff member.** The Recovery Annex should include and account for
  - Time needed to discuss the incident and provide care for those impacted;
  - Changes that may need to be made to the educational environment in the aftermath of the incident (Aspects of the educational environment that may need to be adjusted or strengthened due to bereavement include changes in assessment or instructional schedules to account for time needed to discuss the incident with students and staff, and the potential need for additional classroom support staff.);
  - Provision of [social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports](#), which includes designating a planned space and time in which bereavement counseling will take place; having a system in place for monitoring students' grades, attendance, behavior, and emotional responses after the incident; communicating about student needs; and making referrals as needed; and

- The roles of those expected to conduct activities related to bereavement, including
  - Who will conduct trainings on trauma-informed care before and after the incident (as well as details on when and how often trainings will take place);
  - Who will hold the initial discussions with students;
  - Who will be available for bereavement counseling; and
  - Who will communicate with families and staff about changes in the educational environment, supports that will be offered, and how to access additional support if needed (School leaders, crisis response team members, mental health personnel, educators, and [community engagement specialists](#) are a few of the individuals who may play a role in these activities.).
- **Establish partnerships with community mental health providers.** This can help to build upon the services the school can provide and to serve students or staff who need more specialized mental health care. The Recovery Annex should include
  - References to any [memoranda of understanding or agreements](#) that outline partnerships between the school and the community mental health provider(s);
  - Details on the expected roles and responsibilities of school staff and community mental health provider(s) following an emergency; and
  - Protocols for ongoing communication, service coordination, and information sharing between the school and mental health provider(s).
- **Detail policies and procedures for all types of memorials.** Policies, which should be outlined in the Recovery Annex, should contain
  - Information about how long after an incident a memorial or memorial activity will be considered (In general, planned memorials and memorial activities should not be constructed or take place immediately after the incident, as this may communicate to the community that the school is ready and eager to move on from the incident.);
- Details on
  - Which types of memorials will be allowed for different incidents;
  - How different incidents should be depicted and whether and how they will be publicized;
  - How schools will plan and solicit input from students, staff, and the community on the creation of memorials and memorial activities;
  - How a temporary or permanent memorial will be maintained (including how maintenance will be funded) and who is responsible for its maintenance;
  - How long a spontaneous or temporary memorial will be allowed to stand;
  - How schools will respond to student and staff social, emotional, and behavioral responses to the memorial events and activities, including preparedness for retraumatization;
  - How schools will monitor the safety of the site or activity;
  - Policies for student and staff attendance at funerals, memorial services, and memorial activities that take place during the school day (Examples of policies to consider in advance of an incident include requirements for excused and unexcused absences, the need for permission slips or parent chaperones, and capacity limits for activities and services that take place on school grounds.); and
  - How the school will handle unplanned or unexpected activities related to memorials, such as public intrusion onto the school grounds by the media or public during a memorial service or requests for inclusion in memorial activities by community members or media representatives.
- **Include policies and guidelines for anniversaries of emergency incidents, including those that result in the death of a member of the school community.** Unlike emergencies which are by definition unplanned and often unpredictable, anniversaries will occur every year following an incident, whether schools are prepared or not.

Considerations to include in the Recovery Annex that are unique to anniversaries include details on

- How schools will operate and acknowledge the anniversary if it falls on a school day;
- How schools will communicate with new staff members about the incident and what to expect on its anniversary;
- How or if the school will allow media representatives to be present at any remembrance activities;
- How schools will ensure activities are safe and supervised; and
- How students and staff members needing additional services around the time of the anniversary will be supported.

Because schools are central hubs of learning, care, and support to their communities, they are also in a unique position to provide support in the aftermath of a tragedy. With a trained staff and comprehensive Recovery Annex to the school EOP, schools can, with the support of their community partners, successfully support those grieving and contribute to the healing process. In fact, a high-quality, trauma-informed EOP that addresses bereavement, anniversaries, and memorials can help bring the community together in a healthy way, mitigate the impacts of loss, and promote long-term recovery.

## Resources

### Further Reading – REMS TA Center

- [Managing Bereavement and Loss as a Part of School and Higher ed Emergency Preparedness Planning](#), Announcement
- [Car Crash Resulting in Student Deaths: A Local Case Study](#), Publication
- [Managing Anniversaries and Memorials as a Part of School and Campus Safety Efforts](#), Announcement
- [Recovery Annex At a Glance](#), Web Page
- [Managing Immediate, Short-Term, and Long-Term Recovery From an Emergency Incident](#), Web Page
- [Planning for Your Education Agency's Recovery From an Emergency Incident](#), Web Page

### Training Opportunities – REMS TA Center

- [Trauma-Informed Care for Schools Before, During, and After Possible Emergency Events](#), Webinar
- [Responding to Bereavement and Loss](#), Specialized Training Package
- [School EOPs In-Depth: Developing a Bereavement and Loss Annex](#), Online Course
- [Understanding Educator Resilience & Developing a Self-Care Plan](#), Specialized Training Package
- [Understanding Educator Resilience & Developing a Self-Care Plan](#), Webinar
- [The Role of School Mental Health Professionals in Supporting School Safety Efforts](#), Webinar
- [Understanding the Role of School Psychologists in Supporting School Safety Before, During, and After an Emergency](#), Webinar
- [Managing Memorials and Anniversaries as a Part of Overall School and Higher ed Safety Planning](#), Webinar
- [Developing a Recovery Annex](#), Specialized Training Package
- [Planning to Recover From Emergencies at Districts and Schools](#), Webinar

### Further Reading – Bereavement and Loss

- [Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs](#), Publication (U.S. Department of Education)
- [Childhood Traumatic Grief: Information for School Personnel](#), Fact Sheet (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- [Supporting Students and Staff in the Aftermath of Crisis and Loss](#), Webinar (Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network [MHTTCN])
- [Returning to School After an Emergency or Disaster: Tips to Help Your Students Cope](#), Web Page (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Tips for Survivors: Coping With Grief After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#), Publication (HHS, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA])
- [Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Coping With Retraumatization](#), Publication (HHS, SAMHSA)

- [Guidelines for Responding to the Death of a Student or School Staff](#), Web Page (National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB))
- [Guidelines for Schools Responding to a Death by Suicide](#), Web Page (NCSCB)
- [Death and School Crisis](#), Online Training Modules (Coalition to Support Grieving Students [CSGS])
- [Suicide](#), Web Page (CSGS)
- [Guidelines on Commemoration of Students at Time of Graduation](#), Web Page (NCSCB)
- [Commemoration and Memorialization](#), Web Page (CSGS)

**Further Reading – Recovery Annex Development**

- [After a School Tragedy...Readiness, Response, Recovery, & Resources](#), Publication (MHTTCN)

**Further Reading – Memorials and Anniversaries**

- [Anniversaries of Traumatic Events: Guidance for Educators](#), Web Page (NASP)



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