

Mobile Grief Response Team

The Mobile Grief Response Team is part of the Crisis Center’s core commitment to the community and consists of two tracks: Postvention, addressing a loss to suicide or other sudden death, and critical or urgent incident response. The Mobile Grief Response Team provides a rapid, field-based response to provide grief and crisis counseling at schools and businesses following a death, disaster, or other critical incident. This counseling orients friends, teachers, and colleagues to a trauma response including the grief process. If a student dies by suicide, we counsel school personnel in actions that reduce the likelihood of “copycat” behavior, as well as appropriate ways to discuss suicide and memorialize the deceased.

Mobile Grief Response Teams are comprised of staff and volunteers trained to respond to a multitude of crises utilizing critical incident response and debriefing techniques. Upon arrival, the team focuses on short term goals that may unfold over the course of a few hours or several days as each response is tailored to the unique circumstances of the particular loss or crisis. In general, the goal for each response team is to:

- 1.) To stabilize the workplace community and to help individuals at all levels of the organization (and related family/community) to cope with the trauma and grief. Survivorship of a suicide loss, if not supported well, may lead to other psychological conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and substance abuse. The initial hours and days following a suicide can make a big difference for survivors and their subsequent emotional healing; however, longer-term support may also be needed.
- 2.) To prevent further suicides or decline in mental health. Suicide contagion, or the copycat effects of suicide, are often seen in younger high-risk adolescents, but can also happen among vulnerable adults. Postvention practices work toward minimizing the factors that might make copycat suicide more likely.
- 3.) To help the workplace return to normalcy and the pursuit of its mission. Rumors, second guessing, and blame can create critical rifts in the workplace family; thus, containment is needed to help reassure people and give them appropriate means to express their feelings. A balance is often needed between providing support for those who need it and letting people get back to their regular lives. For most, after an initial expression of grief, a school/workplace may be able to return to a normal routine more quickly than for workplaces that are denied an opportunity to express openly.

Initiating a response

Initiating a Mobile Grief Response Team begins with a call to the 24/7 Grief Hotline at 211 or (800) 837-1818. After a brief assessment, the Crisis Center’s staff will confirm the invitation with an authorized representative of the organization (e.g., Principal, Superintendent, Executive Director, CEO), and coordinate the details of the response including date, time, location, and number of participants. It is important to note that the Crisis Center can only dispatch a mobile response team **upon invitation from an authorized representative of the organization.**



The Crisis Center requests that the organization provide the following:

- A safe, clean, confidential space to meet with groups or individuals
- A staff person or site contact to orient the grief response team to the site and make appropriate introductions
- A site map if available
- Access to water, a phone, and restrooms

Limitations and Considerations

Please keep in mind that the Crisis Center may need to modify the scope of services if the crisis or sudden death includes the following:

- An active, ongoing law enforcement investigation
- Suspected or alleged child, elder, or dependent adult abuse
- The family or significant other of the decedent has not consented to the Crisis Center's participation
- A conflict of interest regarding multiple requests for response teams including incidents where there may be more than one victim or victim/suspect requests.

Keep in mind when supporting someone who has been bereaved by suicide or other traumatic loss...

Do:

- Give time to listen and understand
- Ask what can you do that would help
- Be yourself and communicate naturally
- Ask the person if he/she would like to talk about it
- Know what supports and services are available elsewhere
- If you don't know what to say, explain that you don't know what to say

Try To Avoid:

- Avoiding the person or allowing awkwardness to prevent you offering support
- Offer too much opinion or speculate on events
- Avoid talking about the person who has died
- Assume you know how the person is feeling
- Use clichés ("there is a reason for everything", "time is a great healer", "they must be at peace now")
- Attempt to find reasons for or pass judgment on their loss or crisis
- Ask how they are, unless you have time to listen

For additional questions or to request a grief response team:

Crisis Line – 24/7, free and confidential

800-833-2900

Grief Support Line – 24/7, free and confidential

800-837-1818

www.crisis-center.org