

TRAUMATIC LOSS TEAMS

The Baltimore County Public Schools has developed eight Traumatic Loss Teams (TLT) to provide support to school staff and students in the event of a traumatic death of a student or staff member by sudden illness, accident, murder, or a completed suicide. The role of a team or a team member will vary widely from a telephone consultation to an on-site postvention procedure. Consultation is also provided to administrators whose schools anticipate or have experienced losses due to a long-term illness or require assistance to address the needs of a student who has threatened or attempted suicide. A Traumatic Loss Team may also assist by supplementing the counseling services of the Student Support Services staff assigned to the school in time of critical need due to loss.

All Traumatic Loss Teams are staffed by volunteer personnel from Student Support Services. All TLT members receive ongoing training in crisis management, grief counseling, posttraumatic defusing and debriefing counseling, and consultation on loss and its impact on the school community. Each team is led by a team member, usually a school psychologist who acts a team coordinator. Additionally, an elementary school counselor, a pupil personnel worker, a school nurse, a school social worker, and a secondary school counselor are on each team. Procedures for who to contact and how to use these teams are listed below. All administrators are reminded that the success of the Traumatic Loss Team project depends upon the willingness of building administrators to release TLT members to help a school in need. As a general practice, this permission should be readily provided.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

DEATH OF STUDENT (After School Hours)

An administrator may be made aware of a death affecting the school community and should immediately call the Project Director of Traumatic Loss Teams using the TLT pager system. In some cases the administrator may be notified by the Project Director of the Traumatic Loss Teams (TLT) after notification by Baltimore County Police Department of a death of a school-aged youth. In this case, the Project Director will notify the principal and offer a Traumatic Loss Team to assist the school. The building administration will contact or be contacted by the selected Traumatic Loss Team's leader and proceed immediately to develop a postvention plan. Administrators should discuss with the TLT leader the most effective strategy for informing staff and students. **Any use of public address system to announce a death is to be avoided.**

Support services provided by TLT include:

- telephone consultation
- consultation to school staff, at a faculty meeting, on their role in assisting students after a death in the school
- all-day crisis intervention (direct and indirect counseling and consultation)
- developmentally appropriate materials on bereavement and grief work for students
- recommendations on contact with bereaved families
- briefing and debriefing with faculty and staff on recommended procedures
- sample letters to send home for parents on the grief process

ALSO CALL

Area Assistant Superintendent

Office of Communications: 410-887-5908

(System-level notification of event and media assistance, if needed)

Office of Employee Assistance: 410-887-5414

(Counseling assistance for staff, if needed)

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