

2010



Coláiste Abbáin

Patricia O'Connor

[BEREAVEMENT POLICY]

This document contains Coláiste Abbáin's Bereavement Policy.

COLAISTE ABBAIN

DRAFT BEREAVEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Colaiste Abbain recognises the responsibility to respond to a death in the school community. The school will endeavour to support and care for all those affected by bereavement, while acknowledging the individual characteristics of each particular situation. It is important for all partners within the school community to liaise and work together, in time enabling the school to return to a healthy, learning environment.

THE SCHOOL RESPONSE TEAM

The School Response Team (SRT) is composed of the following members of Staff:

Mr. Lillis
Mr. Crean
Ms. Tuohy
Ms. Sutton
Ms. Kehoe
Ms. Wall

THE PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Fr. Nolan
Mr. Crean
Ms. Wall

IMMEDIATE STEPS IN THE EVENT OF DEATH OR A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER

A concerted team effort by all staff members in helping students/staff cope with the sense of shock which they will invariably experience will ensue. The Pastoral Care team and Chaplaincy services will be available to support students/staff.

The Principal will:

- obtain all factual information about the death, in so far as he can
- mobilise the SRT and allocate roles

- notify staff and classes
- communicate with parents
- liaise with the bereaved family
- deal with the media
- start a book of condolence, having obtained prior approval from the deceased's family
- close the school on the day of the funeral if appropriate

Following consultation with the SRT, the Principal will make a decision with regard to school routine for the period up to the burial of the deceased.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN WHEN A DEATH OCCURS

- The Principal informs staff members.
- The SRT meets.
- The Principal or his representative and one other member of the SRT visit the family. They will discuss with the family, either then or subsequently, the school's involvement and support (i.e. attendance at funeral, involvement in funeral service, etc.) as appropriate, according to the wishes of the family.
- The Principal/member of SRT will inform the student's/teacher's class/year group, by reading aloud a prepared statement, that the student/teacher has died/experienced a family bereavement. If a teacher has died or has experienced a bereavement, classes will be informed, if the teacher or his/her family so wishes.
- A member of the SRT will stay with a class allowing them time to absorb the news of the death and inform them that the Counselling Room will be available for students.
- As soon as the funeral arrangements become known, the Principal will make them known to staff and students.
- The Principal will liaise with the family of the deceased with regard to appropriate school involvement - guard

of honour to accompany hearse at removal and/or at church, readings, floral tributes, music, Mass cards, donations etc.

- Class group and close friends accompanied by Class Teacher and members of SRT will attend the funeral. Transport for students to the funeral will be arranged if necessary.
- If the school remains open, other students will be permitted to attend the funeral, if they have written consent from their parents.
- A member of the SRT/ Pastoral Care/SPHE will talk to each class on how to treat the bereaved student/teacher on his/her return to school.

A member of the SRT will inform bereaved student/teacher of the services available to him/her at an appropriate time.

POSTVENTION COUNSELLING SERVICES

Counselling services may be required by students and staff in the aftermath of a death in the school community. The SRT will act accordingly, organising same for all who wish to avail of such services. The decision to engage such services will be communicated to all staff members and students on an individual basis.

Health Boards and other agencies will be contacted for advice and appropriate counselling services.

PERSONAL PROPERTY OF DECEASED

A member of the SRT will gather any personal belongings/items belonging to the deceased. These will be passed on to the bereaved family if so desired. At this time the Book of Condolence will be presented to the family.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF THE DECEASED

It is recognised by Colaiste Abbain that commemoration of the life of the deceased is particular to each family. It is also recognised that the deceased will have played a part in the life of the school community and Colaiste Abbain staff and students will want to commemorate the deceased in their own milieu. Consultation between the school and the deceased's family will take place in order to put in place a meaningful commemoration of the life of the deceased by the school community. The family of the deceased will be invited to attend such a commemoration. The views of the class/year group and close friends will be actively sought in the organisation of any such commemoration of the life of the deceased. This will be done in consultation with the SRT.

NOTIFYING PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

The staff will be notified as soon as possible after the news has reached the school.

The students will then be informed, class by class, beginning with the class/year group of the student.

The CEO, Chairperson of the Board of Management and Chairperson of Parents' Association will be informed by the Principal.

The parents will be notified, giving the following information:

- Funeral arrangements
- School closure (in the event of the death of a student or staff member)
- Attendance at/participation in funeral
- Information re the possible reactions of their son/daughter to the trauma/death, emphasising that most reactions, even if distressing, are normal and that their son/daughter may need some additional support at this time.

FUNERAL SERVICES

A decision will be made by the SRT as to the form of school representation appropriate, following consultation with the family of the deceased. The school will never presume that the bereaved family will want a very public presence by the school at the funeral service(s).

Students will be prepared ahead of the funeral. This may be the first occasion for some of the students to be exposed to major grief.

For those students who wish, they will be encouraged and assisted to write a personal message of sympathy. The school will also consider a common expression of sympathy from the school community.

The SRT will check out with the family or funeral directors the arrangements with regard to floral tributes. Any accompanying messages will be hand-written.

Representatives of the school will visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, the SRT will phone ahead to check that this is welcome and appropriate. Visiting the bereaved is distressing; the school recognises this and will endeavour to support those involved in such visits.

MEDIA

Only the designated member of the SRT will communicate with the media. Other members of the school community will be advised not to make innocent remarks to the media concerning the death of the student/teacher. Remarks could be misconstrued and could lead to considerable unnecessary distress for the student/teacher/bereaved family.

IN THE EVENT OF DEATH AT THE FOLLOWING TIMES:

School time:

The school may close on the day of the funeral service.

Weekend:

Communication will be made, as far as possible, to provide the opportunity for the school community to attend the funeral service.

Holiday time:

Communication* will be made, as far as possible, to provide the opportunity for the school community to attend the funeral service.

An appropriate form of commemoration for the deceased and the bereaved family/friends will be organised when the school resumes after the holidays.

* A staff network is in place, whereby staff members will be contacted by text message, by the Principal.

Students will be contacted, in so far as is possible, by their class teachers or other members of staff.

Appendix

Draft announcement of death

Draft letter to parents

List of useful contacts

Proposed by: Pastoral Care Team

Proposal date: 18th May, 2007