**PLANNING AFTER COVID 19 LOSS**

**Please reach out to the NEMLEC STARS through your Superintendent and Police Chief as we are always available for consultation and support.**

**DAY ONE (All to be done via technology if still under a stay at home directive)**

* First Priority is to **assemble the school crisis team and determine a point person for the crisis team** who will act as point of contact for the team and outside providers (possibly law enforcement, medical, mental health, community leaders). Crisis team point person will also be a point of contact with the central office.
  + A format should be developed as to how information will be documented and shared (ie. google doc, spreadsheet, etc.) to avoid replication of tasks and improve fluidity of communication
  + Appoint a staff member or central office technology personnel to assist with navigating technology needs.
  + The designated crisis team point person will gather and ensure accurate information sharing.
* **Assign a family liaison**. The identified family liaison could possibly be school administration, guidance, mental health or other individual who may have a connection with the family and is emotionally available to maintain contact.
  + All information gathered by the family liaison will be routed through the crisis team point person.
  + In the course of connecting with family, the family liaison will
    - Share condolences and offer assistance to family in the form of food delivery, mental health resources, other concrete services needing referrals or organization.
    - Gather factual information related to cause of death and possible services (ie: virtual funeral etc). Inform the family of the school's plans to notify staff and students and obtain resources for those individuals or groups struggling with the loss.
    - Request permission from family to release the manner of death (Note: if permission is not given or the family is unable to be reached, leave details of cause of death out of any correspondence or media related information).
* **Once information about the death is gathered, reconvene the crisis team** and central office personnel and share news and assign tasks via tele networking
  + If the deceased is a student, remove the student’s name/contacts from “school messenger”, ASPEN, X2, school rosters. If the deceased is a staff member please remove them from the same platforms.
  + Make sure parent/guardian contact is also removed from these platforms so the deceased's family is not getting the Connect Ed messages.
  + If it is a student death, provide phone notification to present and past teachers, coaches, etc.
  + If a staff death, provide phone notification to team teachers, department members, known friends on staff and consider a phone network to check in with all staff members. While email may be more efficient given the circumstances a personal contact via phone is highly recommended.
  + Create initial letter/email for staff and families-templates are located on toolkit under COVID 19
    - Attach resources related to loss and COVID-19. Resources are located in Toolkit under COVID 19 and at the end of the sample letters section.
  + Determine counseling needs with counseling staff specific to the deceased child/staff/family. If needed, determine need for utilizing other counselors in the district (beyond the affected school) as well as outside resources
    - Connect to family, siblings, close friends, extended family members in the school district, teachers, advisors, coaches, peer cohorts related to extracurricular activities, team teaching cohorts, possible relationship partners (girlfriends/boyfriends)
  + Connect with school counselors to determine specific needs of the general student/staff population
    - Provide check in with students/staff who are at high risk, who have recently or in the past experienced a loss, or have a known mental health issue.
    - Ask for communication from them if there are any major concerns of which you should be made aware and appropriate resources shared and/or referrals be made.
    - Concerns and need for follow up should be documented on the communication platform being used.
    - All possible forms of communication should be exhausted to ensure contact. (i.e. Phone, Emergency contacts, Emails, Class Dojo, Google Classroom, Remind app, School student information system)
  + Consider use of a Virtual Post-It White Board (ex. Miro.com; Stormboard.com)
    - If a virtual condolence board is used, provide families, students and staff with a clear time frame that the board will be available (recommended two days) and note that comments will be shared with the family at some point.
    - If appropriate, consider setting up a virtual drop in room on day 2 for staff and/or students who want to check in. Set a limited time for drop in hours for the site and have school mental health staff monitor/facilitate the room
    - Should you choose not to utilize a virtual drop in site or for individuals wanting a more private option, provide students/families and staff with information on how to access the schools counselors/mental health staff
  + Inform all parents/staff of mental health crisis resources in the community that are available on a 24 hours basis.
  + Send flowers/card on behalf of school community to family
* Hold a voluntary virtual staff meeting to check in with staff, update them on any plans for services, obtain feedback regarding concerns/ideas and provide them with self care resources-resources are available on the toolkit under COVID 19
  + Make sure to connect with support service staff as well as teachers (clerks, paraprofessionals, nurse, speech/OT/PT, custodians, outside the building coaches, those who may not ordinarily attend a staff meeting)
* If police and local emergency mental health services are not a part of the existing school crisis team then contact each to inform them of the loss and steps that the school is taking to address the loss
  + If the loss is a middle or high school student ask police to monitor common gathering spaces in town for these age levels (these age levels may choose to congregate as a way to grieve regardless of the mandates for stay at home or curfews imposed)
* Reconvene the school crisis team to review steps taken on Day 1, follow up needs and plans for day 2. **Make sure to encourage the crisis team members to practice self care** and plan for crisis team meeting on the morning of Day 2.

**Note: It often happens that Staff/parents/students may request to hold virtual vigils or memorials for the deceased. Per STARS best practice recommendations and previous STARS experience, it is not recommended that schools or districts plan, hold or direct these events. It is recommended that schools and districts can support the idea of such rituals if desired but ask the requesting party to plan and facilitate the event in conjunction with the deceased’s family’s wishes.**

**DAY TWO**

* **Reconvene the school crisis team**, check in on the team’s emotional state and delineate assignments for the day.
  + Crisis team point person or designee should follow up on any emails sent related to the loss from parents, students or staff
  + Consider follow up email to staff to remind them to utilize self care resources
  + If using a **Virtual Post-It White Board** (ex. Miro.com; Stormboard.com) determine when it will be taken down and who will gather the information on it to share with the family at some point.
  + If using a **virtual drop in room** determine who will be monitoring the site.
  + Review which counselors are available and during what times to take emergency calls from students/staff/families
  + Family liaison should attempt to reach out to affected family again if they have not yet been successful in doing so. If they have reached the family, a brief call to again offer support and services would be appropriate. Obtain information on virtual services to be held if appropriate.
  + Crisis team should **review documentation of students/staff who require continued follow up** or who have not yet been reached and assign counselors to contact those persons.
* When able (if schools are closed) gather deceased’s belongings from the desk/office/locker/sport locker to be given to the family. If school remains closed, point person should make note to do this as soon as school reopens before students and staff return.
* If deemed needed, hold another voluntary staff meeting to connect, address concerns/needs and provide any updated information on services/plans going forward. It may be felt that this can be done via email. If so, make sure to let people know how they can access support and who to call with concerns/issues.
* At the end of day 2, reconvene the crisis team to review day’s progress/issues/concerns. Review students and staff who require additional follow up and determine which crisis team member will be responsible for this. **Remember to check on the emotional state of the members of the school crisis team as this is hard work and they are individuals with their own history and who are also going through this pandemic as well.**

**DAY THREE AND BEYOND**

* **Reconvene the school crisis team** (you may not need the full team at this point)
  + Review any further check ins and follow ups needed with staff/students/families
  + Family liaison may have updated info on virtual services. If so, share this info via email with staff and families if appropriate.
  + Review plans in place for students/staff/families to connect with school administration or counselors in case of emergency or other mental health issues. Make sure this information remains available to students/staff/families via technology platforms (website, connect ed, email, dojo etc)
  + As long as school is closed, **maintain contact with identified high risk staff/students/families via available technology as you would do should school be in session.**
  + Debrief with the school crisis team and check in on one another while you are all checking in on others! Take time to rest, reset, regroup and rejuvenate in any way you can during this unprecedented challenging time.