**Sample Talking Points – Death: Accident or Illness (Cause Unrelated to School Activities)**

1. We have been informed one of our students has died.
2. Our thoughts and support go out to [his/her] family and friends at this difficult time.
3. Trained crisis counselors will be available to meet with students and staff starting tomorrow and continuing over the next few weeks as needed.
4. (For School Community vs. Media) We are in regular contact with the family of the victim and will share information related to funeral arrangements in accordance with their wishes.
5. *[Optional – Use if the cause of death was related to an issue with broader safety concerns (alcohol, drugs, driver safety, other risk behaviors) in the community.]*

The school will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location].

* 1. Members of the school’s Crisis Response Team [or mental health professionals] will be present to provide information about common reactions following a death and how adults can help youths cope.
  2. The following organizations will also be present to share information on [insert purpose].
  3. A meeting announcement has been sent to parents, who can contact school administrators or counselors at [number] or [e-mail address] for more information.

1. (For School Community vs. Media) While it is normal to experience situational depression as a consequence of grief, we recommend parents be alert to the signs of depression in youngsters following this loss. If one or more of these signs of depression persist over time, parents should seek help from a professional:

• Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying

• Decreased interest in activities; or inability to enjoy previously favorite activities

• Hopelessness

• Persistent boredom; low energy

• Social isolation, poor communication

• Low self-esteem and guilt

• Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure

• Increased irritability, anger, or hostility

• Difficulty with relationships

• Frequent complaints of physical illnesses such as headaches and stomachaches

• Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school

• Poor concentration

• A major change in eating and/or sleeping patterns

• Talk of or efforts to run away from home

• Thoughts or expressions of suicide or self-destructive behavior.

**RESOURCES**

* **Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Line:** 1-888-724-7240 (Hearing Impaired TTY: 619-641-6992.) Professional counselors will answer your call and help you through a crisis. Counselors offer a broad range of services, including crisis and suicide intervention, and referrals to appropriate mental health professionals or programs for face to face services. Assistance is available in Spanish and other languages, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
* **Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD):** 877-ASK-MADD or 877-275-6233. <http://www.madd.org/>
* **Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD):** 877-SADD-INC or 877-723-3462. <http://www.sadd.org/>
* **D*!*STRATION.GOV** (US Government Website on Distracted Driving)**:** <http://www.distraction.gov/index.html>
* **CHP Start Smart (Teen Driver Safety Program):** <http://www.chp.ca.gov/community/startsmart.html>