



MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Note: The following guidelines in no way limit the school's commitment to provide emotional support to students and staff following the death of an individual student or staff member. For additional information, please refer to the *Division Crisis Response Plan* and Policy KDC – Use of School Facilities for Grief-Related Activities.

Preamble

In general, the role of the school is to support community activities such as funeral services, memorial services, etc. There is increasing pressure being put on schools to become the central location of formal grieving activities for students. This trend should generally be resisted. While the school has a role to support the emotional needs of both students and staff during a death or tragedy, the *School Crisis Response Team* should keep in mind the following in their consideration as to what is appropriate:

- There will undoubtedly be a comparison of memorial efforts by the school(s). This can lead to contention and rancor just when it is not needed. Thus, all school memorial activities must be seen as establishing a reasonable precedent that may be continued when other school-related deaths occur.
- School-based memorial activities may be mistakenly interpreted as indicating a tacit attempt to end the grief process, when the school should be signaling that the grief and healing process can go on for as long as necessary to facilitate optimal recovery.
- School-based memorial activities, particularly at the Junior and Senior High level, can easily lead to non-sanctioned activities by students (e.g. 'goodbye' mural on a gym wall, creation of a 'shrine' at the student's locker, etc.) The potential for unnecessary conflict with students at a very vulnerable and emotionally laden time is extremely high.
- School-based memorial activities can lead to secondary emotional trauma for vulnerable staff and students who are expected to use those same school facilities after the memorial event.
- Memorials following a suicide must not occur as they have been shown to elevate the risk that other vulnerable students may make an attempt.

Acceptable Activities

The following are simply representative of activities that schools may choose to do in remembering an individual:

- School representation at community funerals, community memorial activities, etc.
- Brief remembrances attached to other school activities such as a 'minute of silence' the morning of the scheduled funeral, etc.
- 'Living' activities such as planting a tree, raising money for a charity linked to the student's interests, etc.
- Special memorial notice in the school yearbook.
- Flowers and/or cards of condolence from the school, students, classrooms, etc.



File KDC-R

Requests for Exceptions

In situations involving violent death, multiple deaths, and other extraordinary circumstances, the school may feel the need to support its students in ways different than those listed above. In such circumstances, the School Crisis Response Team must consult with the Division Crisis Response Team before proceeding.