



# Death of a Child Policy

The unexpected death of a child at a School is a traumatic event and the impact on Educators, children and families can cause emotional turmoil, which can overwhelm usual coping skills. A policy providing comprehensive procedures and principles is therefore crucial to ensure a coordinated response and notification to the regulatory authorities.

Due to the suddenness of such an event, well-trained and experienced staff can experience strong emotions and traumatic stress responses as a result of the event. The role of our School is to help restore a sense of safety for children, Educators and families as soon as possible following a traumatic event.

## Education and Care Schools National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Schools) National Law NSW	
12	Meaning of serious incident
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

### SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, The School Board and visitors of the School.

### PURPOSE

Our School will ensure that the School Board and Educators follow the procedures and principles within this policy and that immediate and appropriate action is taken to notify relevant authorities in the event of the death of a child whilst at the School. There are a number of legal requirements to adhere to in the tragic event of the death of a child at a School as outlined below.

### SERIOUS INCIDENTS

Regulation 12 prescribes the following serious incident-

(a) The death of a child- while that child is being educated and cared for by an education and care School/Primary School or following an incident occurring while that child was being educated and cared for by an education and care School/Primary School;

### NOTIFICATION OF A SERIOUS INCIDENT

Under the National Law and Regulations, the approved provider must notify the regulatory authorities within 24 hours of any serious incidents through the online NQA IT System. *Section 174(2) (a) and Regulation 176 (2) (a)* [Download the template here: incident, injury, trauma and illness record template to record any supporting evidence.](#)

### KEEPING CHILDREN'S RECORDS

In the event of the death of a child whilst being cared for at the School, records need to be kept for 7 years from the child's death.

### INITIAL ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

#### Principal/Educators will:-

Ensure that immediate and appropriate action is taken in the event of the death of a child whilst at the School by following and implementing the following procedure:

1. Assess the situation as per School procedures for any immediate danger to other children or staff
2. Attempt CPR in accordance with current First Aid requirements
3. Call an Ambulance immediately
4. The School Board will call the parents/guardian of the child and arrange to meet at the hospital
5. Medical Staff will advise families
6. Notify Regulatory Authorities including Policy Department and Family and Community Schools
7. Complete Illness, Incident, Accident, Trauma Form
8. Contact Insurance Company
9. Log incident onto NQA TI System, attaching incident form and evidence

#### The School Board/Principal will:

also ensure that parents, families, children and educators will receive the following post incident support:

- Demonstrate sensitivity, open mindedness and a balanced approach
- Recognition of cultural needs
- Preservation of evidence
- Accurate and detailed record keeping
- The School Board to contact legal representative for support and direction
- Protocols established for staff and Educators to discuss the traumatic event through media including social media
- Professional communication with families of the School
- Engage the Schools of health care professionals (counseling & support for staff)
- Ongoing cooperation with inter-agencies involved in investigation

#### Principal to do:-

**Notify Teachers and Staff First:** Meet before school with school teachers and staff to discuss what is known about the death. This gives teachers an opportunity to ask any questions they wish and to prepare themselves before they see their students in class. If a teacher does not feel able to talk to his/her students about the death, a member of the crisis team should be available to step in or assist with the notification.

**Notify Students Face-to-Face with Familiar Staff:** If a teacher has died, consider having a teacher from the same or a lower grade who is familiar with the deceased teacher's students, or a teacher from the school crisis team who is more comfortable, notify that class. Consider having this teacher remain with the class over the next couple days and have a substitute cover for the less directly impacted class.

**Prepare a Statement for Parents:** Draft a letter to be sent home with students for parents to notify them about the death and what services are being offered to students and families. Assure parents that crisis teams have been mobilized and support services are available. (Template letters, that schools can have in advance of a crisis so that notification statements can be quickly and easily prepared, are available at the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement.)

#### What Teachers can do:-

1. Listen – to what students want to share with you. It may be difficult but just listening can be a powerful healing force.
2. Protect – students from becoming re-traumatized. Sometimes other students may ridicule or bully students who are highly emotional or cry.
3. Connect – with students who have suffered a loss by asking how they are doing; checking in with them on a regular basis; letting them know that you are available to listen; or giving them positive feedback about their attendance or classroom work.
4. Model – adult behaviour that shows them how responsible adults react to loss and respond to a crisis. Adults may grieve, but they continue to act with consideration and maintain calm routines at school.
5. Teach – Crisis counsellors can teach students about the normal signs and symptoms of grief and/or trauma so that students can assess and understand their own behaviour and learn new ways of coping.

#### Help Students with Coping Behaviours to Support and Maintain their Attendance and Classroom Learning:

Following a loss, addressing the event with students directly may decrease the negative impact on school attendance and learning. This can be done individually and in group settings. Students may express many different emotions and feelings. The goal is to allow this expression in a safe and non-judgmental environment.

**Help Students Deal with Difficult Feelings:** Students may also have feelings of regret, particularly if they believe they had mistreated the individual in the past. Adolescents may be particularly vulnerable as a group with an increased risk of feeling depressed or anxious and engaging in self-blame or guilt related to the loss

**Help Younger Students:** Younger students may have more difficulty understanding death and are more likely to have literal misinterpretations in response to explanations (e.g., if told the deceased is in everlasting sleep, they may become fearful at bedtime). All students (and staff) are likely to experience some guilt feelings after a death, even if there is no logical reason.

#### Caring for the Wellbeing of Educators, Children's And Families

Our School will engage health professionals who may include child and family counselors and psychologists to support our Educators to be sensitive and mindful of the impact such an event has had on all stakeholders. With professional guidance and support, we will encourage children to express their emotions and feelings and implement strategies to assist and guide children's process of grieving and re-engage children in learning.

Our School will seek advice and support from health professionals to provide appropriate materials to send home to families to assist in understanding the effects of trauma on children and possible changes in behaviour following the unexpected death of a child in our School.

### Source

- Health and Safety in Children's Centres: Model Policies and Practices – 2nd Edition revised (2003)

Policy Review Date	Modification	Review Date
Approved: October 1999		
Reviewed: April 2003		2011
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