

Managing the sudden loss of a medical colleague

Resources, links, guidance from the Medical Directors' of doctors health services

For immediate crisis support:

Lifeline – 13 11 14

BeyondBlue – 1300 22 4636

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

ReMinder Suicide Safety Plan is a free app that allows users to create a digital suicide safety plan, accessible anytime, anywhere.

For Ongoing direct support: for GP and/or Psychologist – You can try your EAP who may be able to assist you to connect with a psychologist – if you prefer to connect with a peer support service.

- **Doctors and medical students** your local doctors' health service – where you can be connected to a doctor and referred to a psychologist – all the doctors' health services 24/7 contact details in each state and territory are all listed on Doctors' Health Alliance homepage - <https://doctorshealthalliance.org.au/>
- **Nurses and midwives** <https://www.nmsupport.org.au/> or phone 1800 667 877
- **Rural and remote health practitioners** contact CRANA Bush Crisis Line (answered by psychologists) <https://crana.org.au/mental-health-wellbeing/call-1800-805-391> or phone 1800 805 391
- **Pharmacists** <https://supportforpharmacists.org.au/> or phone 1300 24 910
- **Dentists** <https://www.dpsupport.org.au/> or phone 1800 377 700

Workplace Response

Know that there is a plan/process for managing the situation - an example of a good overall picture of a workplace response -

<https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Standby-WorkplaceToolkit-web-22.pdf>

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Practical guides for medical practitioners

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Physician Residency/Fellowship Programs

[https://medschool.ucsd.edu/som/hear/resources/Documents/AFSP%20After%20a%20Suicide%20flipbook%20\(1\).pdf](https://medschool.ucsd.edu/som/hear/resources/Documents/AFSP%20After%20a%20Suicide%20flipbook%20(1).pdf)

General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration: After suicide: A resource for GPs

<https://www.racgp.org.au/FSDEDEV/media/documents/Education/GPs/GPMHSC/After-suicide-A-resources-for-GPs.pdf>

A Managers Guideline for the Sudden Death of a Colleague

https://libguides.anzca.edu.au/ld.php?content_id=48309019

Responding to the death by suicide of a colleague in Primary Care – SOM

https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/LTF_SOM_Responding_to_the_death_by_suicide_of_a_colleague_in_Primary_Care.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1hLG8CGjukJ9ShyU56fIYymUboXYuUQ9xgtw23qT9igj8lG2O7ZjIAmcQ

Arrange leave for the people affected: very low threshold for contact with their GP for medical certificate and general debrief.

If the person who died is an intern it might be good to let their medical school know so that things can be provided for students still at medical school who knew the person.

Some facts about suicide...

Some facts about doctor suicide – Dr Clare Gerada is one of the most balanced voices about this – the fact is that about 50% of doctor suicides have no warning at all <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/05/10/clare-gerada-suicide-and-the-myth-of-sisyphus/> and Australian data bears this out <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/imj.13717>

Facts about suicide – Dr Rachel Gibbons' conference presentation "Confronting the 'truth' about suicide and challenging the myths" Day 2, Stream 3 – <https://doctorshealthalliance.org.au/conference-resources/2022-conference-day-2>

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Information to manage conversations & self-care

Conversation guides by Standby

<https://standbysupport.com.au/resources/> Read some and use them as discussion points with your group - the advantages of this is that you know the concepts contained are vetted and so it gives you some confidence that you are not going to say the wrong thing. A recommended template to review

https://conversationsmatter.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CM_Fact_sheet_Core_principles_Postvention_focused_conversations_Final.pdf

A chat about what is 'normal' at this stage

<https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/3.-Grief-after-Suicide-Possible-Experiences-support-pack.pdf> and

<https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/lost-someone-to-suicide/common-experiences-with-suicide-bereavement/>

Acknowledgement of where they are apportioning any blame (either to themselves or others)

The cup analogy is good, it is on this sheet <https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/13.-Unanswered-questions-support-pack.pdf>

Being kind, ways to mentally-de-escalate

<https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/14.-Unwelcome-Intrusive-thoughts-flashbacks-support-pack.pdf> - The headspace app has grief resources - with a video of sitting with grief and shock, and a good meditation on sudden loss, their grieving course is also very good

<https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>

Being kind to themselves

p15 here is good for a list of things to do as self-care

https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Support-After-Suicide-Toolkit-Postvention-Response-For_Site_Owners_And_Leadership.pdf

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Returning to Work

Ways to mourn

<https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/lost-someone-to-suicide/looking-after-yourself-after-a-bereavement/>

How to plan return to work

<https://standbysupport.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/10.-Return-to-work-support-pack.pdf>

Good principles for supporting others

Those affected can often be perfect for providing support to others, however going through this themselves does not automatically skill them up -

https://conversationsmatter.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CM_Fact_sheet_Those_bereaved_by_suicide_Final.pdf

Talking publicly

Social media/talking about this publicly: some good principles here

https://conversationsmatter.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CM_Fact_sheet_When_communities_are_affected_by_suicide_Final.pdf

Post Suicide Support Services

StandBy - Support After Suicide: StandBy is Australia's leading suicide postvention program dedicated to assisting people and communities bereaved or impacted by suicide - <https://standbysupport.com.au/>

Postvention Australia - is a not-for-profit organisation that supports individuals, families and communities who are bereaved by suicide - <https://postventionaustralia.org/>

Beyondblue - after a suicide loss - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/suicide-prevention/after-a-suicide-loss>

Everymind - Understanding Suicide - language/stigma [link here](#).