

Andrew, a 2008 graduate of Loveland High School, died by suicide on October 26, 2010. The news of his loss came to the school in the morning through the parent of one of Andrew's close friends. The crisis team was informed of the sad news and immediately made plans to meet to form a response.

The core team: school nurse, school psychologist, guidance counselor and principal confirmed the news and engaged the team to identify friends still in high school, teachers who taught Andrew in high school and current teachers of his siblings. The initial liaison with the family was the mother of a close friend. Later that day, a crisis team member was designated to contact Andrew's family to offer condolences, support and discuss what could be shared.

The team gathered the names of teachers who were close with Andrew and shared the news with them in person. Another team member wrote an email that was shared with staff members. The staff email included the names of students who had recently interacted with Andrew (this information came through the parent of a close friend of Andrew). Andrew's younger siblings' teachers and friends were notified. Any students or staff member who wanted to come together were invited to come to the guidance department where counselors were available.

Several crisis team members attended Andrew's visitation to provide counseling and support to students.

In the days that followed, members of the crisis team followed up with students who continued to experience difficulty. Andrew's parents were in communication with a staff member at each school to ease the transition of Andrew's siblings back to school. Some of Andrew's friends also sought on-going support throughout the weeks that followed Andrew's death.

Andrew's sister, Angela, joined the school based grief group, Students Experiencing A Loss (SEALS). She became an active member who reached out to peers when they suffered a loss. Angela and Tessa (another student who had lost her brother by suicide) helped to raise awareness about suicide prevention. With the help of some peers they established the first high school chapter of Active Minds. Active Minds is an organization on many college campuses that works to change the perception of mental illness, so people will access mental health supports and decrease rates of suicide.

Andrew's parents have put their grief in action by forming Andrew's Suicide Awareness Program (ASAP). Through ASAP they have provided direct suicide prevention training to school personnel and high school students.

Loveland's district crisis team meets 3 times a year to review plans and incorporate new information/practices. The crisis team followed protocol to provide comfort, support and information following a crisis. SERA has reviewed and collected materials to help prepare your crisis team with the essential protocols should your school district experience a tragic loss.

Andrew's Suicide Awareness Program (ASAP): <http://epiphanyumc.org/asap-andrews-suicide-awareness>

Suicide Education, Research and Advocacy (SERA):
<http://mindpeacecincinnati.com/schools.php>