



# Newfane Senior High School

One Panther Drive

Newfane, New York 14108

Telephone: (716)778-6888 Fax: (716) 778-6578

Web Site: [www.newfane.wnyric.org](http://www.newfane.wnyric.org)

**Daniel L. Bedette**  
Principal

**Danielle Hawkins**  
Assistant Principal

March 22, 2017

Dear Parents:

I am writing this letter with great sadness to inform you that one of our senior students took his life last evening. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his family and friends. All of the students were given the news of his death by their teacher in homeroom this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read to them.

Members of our crisis team met with students individually and in groups today and will be available to the students over the next days and weeks to help them cope with the death of their peer. Information about funeral services will be given to the students once it has been made available to us. Students will be released to attend services only with parental permission and pick up, and we strongly encourage you to accompany your child to any services.

I am including information about suicide and some talking points that can be helpful to you in discussing this issue with your teen. I am also including a list of school and community resources should you feel your child is in need of additional assistance.

If you need immediate assistance, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Please do not hesitate to call me or one of the counselors if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dan Bedette  
Principal  
Newfane High School

It is with great sadness that I share with you that one of our 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, Dan Perski, passed away last night. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way that we can.

A young person's death presents us with many questions we may not be able to answer right away. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors you may hear. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as we can confirm it.

Each of us will react to Dan's death in our own way, and we need to be respectful for each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known Dan very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating on your schoolwork, and others may find that diving into your work or routine is a good distraction.

We have counselors available to help our school community deal with this sad loss. If you are having a hard time today, please don't hesitate to talk to your teachers or come down to guidance at any point.

Please remember we are all here for you.

## After a Suicide: Helping Students Cope

The aftermath of a youth suicide is a sad and challenging time for a community. However, during this time, you can be a powerful role model for students.

### Tips for how to respond to students:

- It is important to normalize and validate feelings such as anger, sadness, shock, fear or confusion. It is certainly acceptable to show your own emotions to students.
- There will likely be a wide range of emotions. Respect that some students may not want to verbalize their feelings, some may want to mourn openly, and still others may not be significantly affected.
- When talking with students, please state that the student died by suicide (NOT committed suicide or successfully attempted).
- To avoid contagion (copy cat) situations, give students the facts, but do not attempt to explain details or why the student ended his/her life. Doing so may communicate to vulnerable students that death is a way to obtain incredible amounts of attention.
- Do not allow students to romanticize or view suicide as an acceptable means to deal with problems. Focus instead on helping students cope with their own grief. Remind students that there are positive coping strategies (talking to a trusted friend or adult, writing thoughts or feelings, exercise, rest) for life's difficulties and that there are resources for anyone contemplating suicide.
- One of the most precious gifts you can give a grieving teen is the gift of your presence.
- Do not feel you must give advice or suggestions. It is acceptable to say, "I don't know, or I don't know the answer, or "This is hard on us all".
- Do not attempt to impose your explanation on why this has happened.
- Do not attempt to reassure that everything is okay.
- Do not tell them you know how he/she feels (because you probably don't).
- Be willing to say nothing.
- Do not lecture or use well-intentioned clichés that minimize or take away from a student's need to mourn. For example, do not say things like "time heals all wounds."

### Commonly asked questions and appropriate responses:

**Why did he/she die by suicide?** We are never going to know the answer to that question as the answer has died with him/her. The focus needs to be on helping you with your thoughts and feelings and everyone working together to prevent future suicides rather than explaining "why".

**What method did they use to end their life?** If you have factual information, answer specifically as to the method, such as he/she shot herself or died by hanging. However, **do not** go into explicit details such as what was the type of gun or rope used or the condition of the body etc. (DCSD protocol attempts to honor the wishes of parents when releasing specific information.)

**What should I say about him/her now that they have made the choice to die by suicide?** It is important that we remember the positive things about them and to respect their privacy and that of their family. Please be sensitive to the needs of their close friends and family members.

**Didn't he/she make a poor choice and is it okay to be angry with them?** They did make a very poor choice and research has found that many young people who survived a suicide attempt are very glad to be alive and never attempted suicide again. You have permission for any and all your feelings in the aftermath of suicide and it is okay to be angry with them.

**Isn't someone or something to blame for this suicide?** The suicide victim made a very poor choice and there is no one to blame. The decision to die by suicide involved every interaction and experience throughout the young person's entire life up until the moment they died and yet it did not have to happen. It is the fault of no one.

**How can I cope with this suicide?** It is important to remember what or who has helped you cope when you have had to deal with sad things in your life before. Please turn to the important adults in your life for help and share your feelings with them. It is important to maintain normal routines, proper sleeping and eating habits and to engage in regular exercise. Please avoid drugs and alcohol. Resiliency, which is the ability to bounce back from adversity, is a learned behavior. Everyone does the best when surrounded by friends and family who care about us and by viewing the future in a positive manner.

**What is an appropriate memorial to a suicide victim?** The most appropriate memorial is a living one such as a scholarship fund or contributions to support suicide prevention. The American Association of Suicidology cautions that permanent markers or memorials such as plaques or trees planted in memory of the deceased dramatize and glorify their actions. Special pages in yearbooks or school activities dedicated to the suicide victim are also not recommended as anything that glorifies the suicide victim will contribute to other teenagers considering suicide.

**What are the warning signs of suicide?** The most common signs are the following: making a suicide attempt, verbal and written statements about death and suicide, fascination and preoccupation with death, giving away of prized possessions, saying goodbye to friends and family, and dramatic changes in behavior and personality.

**What should I do if I believe someone to be suicidal?** Do not minimize their feelings or problems. Listen to them, support them, believe them, and let them know that they are not the first person to feel this way. Do not keep a secret about suicidal behavior. There is help available--mental health professionals such as counselors and psychologists have special training to help young people who are suicidal. It is important to stay with the person until they are connected to their support system. If you feel someone is in imminent danger, call 911.

**Helpful Resources:**

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

1-800-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

1-877-542-SAFE (Safe2Tell encourages students to voice their concerns and take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe.)



## Community Resource List

Program/Location	Services Provided	Phone #'s
<b>Advance Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (APNP)</b> 5330 Main Street, Suite 240 Williamsville, NY 14221	* Psychiatric assessment & Diagnosis * Psychotropic Medication * Child & Adolescent Counseling	626-9016
<b>Annie Coburn Kane</b> Wilson Wellness 638 Lake Street Wilson, NY 14172 <a href="http://www.wellnesswilson.com">www.wellnesswilson.com</a>	* Child & Adolescent Counseling * Family therapy * Adult therapy	379-3557
<b>Angela Magill, MS, PMHNP- Board Certified Nurse Practitioner</b> 5820 Main Street, Suite 308 Williamsville, NY 14221	* Psychiatric assessment & diagnosis * Psychotropic Medication	634-3838
<b>Behavioral Health Associates of WNY</b> <b>Ronald Cooke, MD &amp; Elizabeth Borenzweig, LCSW-R</b> 2360 Sweet Home Road, Suite 4 Amherst, NY 14228	* Child Adolescent & Adult Psychiatry * Psychotropic Medication	748-7474
<b>Behavioral Pediatrics Clinic</b> The Summit Center 415 N. French Road Amherst, NY	* Autism Spectrum Disorder counseling & support * Behavioral support & group counseling	629-3400
<b>Shelly Rosen- LCSW</b> Bewley Building Lockport, NY 14094	* Child & Family Therapy	434-7430
<b>BRY-LIN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL</b> Williamsville Outpatient Center 5225 Sheridan Drive Williamsville, NY 14221	* Addiction Medicine Services * Assessment, Detox, Etc.	633-1927
<b>Casey House shelter</b> 710 Cedar Avenue Niagara Falls, NY	* Runaway program * safe place	285-7125

<p><b>Catholic Charities of Lockport Family Services</b> Bewely Bldg., Suite 450 Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Adolescent and Family Counseling * individual and group counseling * couples counseling * pregnancy counseling</p>	<p>433-0246</p>
<p><b>Catholic Charities of Lockport Monsignor Carr children's clinics</b> Bewely Bldg., Suite 300 Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Mental health services, ages 3-18 * Mental health assessments</p>	<p>Intake 877 448-4466 478-0315</p>
<p><b>Catholic Charities of Lockport Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)</b> Bewely Bldg., Suite 450 Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Youth 7-17 and families * behavioral issues * PINS/court diversion</p>	<p>478-0035</p>
<p><b>Child Advocacy Center of Niagara</b> 501 Tenth Street Niagara Falls, NY 14301</p>	<p>* Abuse Counseling * Medical Evaluations * Family Violence Intervention Project * Parental Support</p>	<p>285-0045</p>
<p><b>Central Referral Service, Inc.</b> <a href="http://www.211wny.org">www.211wny.org</a> Covering all 5 W/NY Counties Erie County Public Safety Campus</p>	<p>* Addictions counseling * Affordable housing * Debt counseling * Developmental disability assistance * Food pantry &amp; soup kitchens * Job counseling * Parenting programs</p>	<p>Dial 211</p>
<p><b>Community Missions</b> 1570 Buffalo Ave Niagara Falls, NY 14303</p>	<p>* Emergency Shelter * Youth programs * Parent support</p>	<p>285-3403</p>
<p><b>CRIB Program</b> 710 Cedar Avenue Niagara Falls, NY</p>	<p>* Pregnancy support and housing</p>	<p>236-7870</p>
<p><b>CRISIS HOTLINE</b></p>	<p>* Individuals or Family Members may contact with any mental health related emergency</p>	<p>285-3515</p>
<p><b>Dr. Diane Tyrell, Psychologist</b> 139 Professional Parkway Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Evaluation &amp; Treatment of Children and Families * Learning and Attention Disorders * Developmental Disabilities</p>	<p>434-7798</p>
<p><b>Dr. Michael Santa-Maria, Neuropsychologist</b> DeGraff Memorial Hospital 445 Tremont St. Room 323 North Tonawanda, NY 14120</p>	<p>* Evaluation of Children and Adolescents (&amp; adults) with a variety of brain based impairments * Full neuropsychological evaluations</p>	<p>690-2560</p>
<p><b>Dr. Melinda Scime, Psychologist</b> Living Wellness of Niagara 1517 Main Street</p>	<p>* Counseling for children, adolescent and adults * Yoga instruction</p>	<p>949-5606</p>

Niagara Falls, NY 14305

**Dr. Phillip Ricotta, Psychologist**  
Patricia Cosgrove, Parent Advocate  
1404 Sweet Home Road, Suite #2  
Amherst, NY 14228

**Dr. Kris Augustyniak**  
John Castellini (clinical social worker)  
Niagara Falls

**Dr. Mary Jo Penizotto**  
6507 Transit Road, Suite B  
East Amherst, NY 14051

**East Amherst Psychology Group**  
9750 Transit Road  
E. Amherst, NY 14051

*Dr. Laura Anderson*  
*Dr. Paul Kopfer*  
*Laurie Belanger*  
*Dr. Cary Chugh*

**Eastern Niagara Hospital**  
Psychiatric Unit  
**Dr. Muscato Transitions Unit**  
Lockport, NY 14094

**Family Counseling Associates**  
884 Brighton Road  
Tonawanda, NY 14150

**Family & Children's Services**  
21-41 Main Street, Lockview Plaza  
Lockport, NY

**Gate House Professional Center**  
**Julie Fierle**  
Clinical Social Worker  
6395 Old Niagara Road  
Lockport, NY 14094

**Tracy Sherman** - same location, different phone # 312-4201  
Licensed Mental Health Counselor

**Life Transitions Center, Inc.**  
3580 Harlem Road  
Buffalo, NY 14215

\* Evaluation & Treatment of Children and Adolescents  
\* Parent Training & Support

\* Counseling with children, adolescents, adults

\* Counseling with adults and couples  
\* Marital counseling  
\* Does not take insurance

\* Child & Adolescent Counseling

\* 12 Bed inpatient hospitalization unit for 5- 17 children

\* Individual, Family and Group Therapy  
\* Psychological Testing  
\* Crisis and Grief Counseling  
\* Stress and Anger Management

\* Child & Adolescent Counseling

\* Child & Adolescent therapy  
\* Trauma based work- Sexual Abuse victims  
\* Family based counseling

\* Grief & loss counseling for individuals, families, & children  
\* Support groups  
\* Crisis intervention

634-0566

285-1904

204-0100

636-1379

514-1297

836-9460  
[www.famcouns.com](http://www.famcouns.com)

433-6019

568-7042 or 312-4201

836-6460

<p><b>New Directions Youth &amp; Family Services</b> 6395 Old Niagara Road Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Family Support Services * Home-Based Crisis Intervention Specialist * Intensive Case Management * Mobile Crisis Outreach Specialist * Preventive Services * Pride in Parenting Program</p>	<p>Margaret Flannery 839-1392 x219 Jeanine Mollen 429-1179 x436</p>
<p><b>Niagara County Probation Department – P.I.N.S.</b> Golden Triangle Office Bldg. 111 Main Street, Suite 201 Lockport, NY 14094</p>	<p>* Persons In Need of Supervision - P.I.N.S. Placement</p>	<p>438-4055</p>
<p><b>Niagara Grief Center</b> 36 Pine Street Lockport, NY 14094 Maggie Campbell (Grief Counselor)- 745-3006 Jan Mauk (Grief Counselor)- 283-1618, 994-1854 cell</p>	<p>* Grief Counseling- primarily tragic or sudden losses</p>	<p>433-3780</p>
<p><b>Suburban Psychiatric Associates (SPA)</b> 85 Bryant Woods South Amherst, NY <i>Sara Brandt-Douglas, LMHC</i></p>	<p>* Psychiatrists for children, as well as counselors for children, adolescents, adults, and families.</p>	<p>689-3333</p>
<p><b>Transit Psychiatry- Nurse Practitioners</b> Jenny Bagen, Marlene Longdon, &amp; Ellen Reilly Forestream Village 4711 Transit Road Suite 3 Lancaster, NY 14043</p>	<p>* Psychotropic Medication for children, adolescents, adults</p>	<p>706-5921</p>
<p><b>Dr. Erin Steck Silvestri- Psychologist</b> 4476 Main Street Suite 205 Snyder, NY 14226</p>	<p>* Counseling for children &amp; adolescents</p>	<p>768-0928</p>
<p><b>UBMD Psychiatry</b> 4955 N. Bailey (suite 130) Amherst, NY 14226</p>	<p>*Child &amp; Adolescent Psychiatry</p>	<p>835-1246</p>
<p><b>WNY Psychotherapy Associates</b> 315 Alberta Drive Amherst, NY 14226 Vicky Murphy- Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Sally Briggs, Ph.D.- Therapist Julie Kramer- Therapist *Many other therapists at the Amherst location as well- check out their website for information:</p>	<p>*Child &amp; Adolescent Counseling &amp; Psychiatry (Family Counseling also available)</p>	<p>716-837-6705 <a href="http://www.wnypsychotherapy.com">www.wnypsychotherapy.com</a></p>