



# White Pigeon Community Schools

*"Every Student—Every Day"*

---

December 4, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians;

Today the teachers read a prepared statement to each class, informing students of a tragedy. A first grade student died this morning in a fire. The information was shared in a very generic sense and no details were explained. Counselors from across the county were available for students today if they needed time to talk. At the bottom of this letter, the statement has been included for you.

With children of school age, a discussion of death may trigger emotional feelings about the death of a relative or favorite pet. Children often personalize and worry when they hear this kind of news that their parent or someone close to them may die. It is important they have an opportunity to talk about these feelings. It is also important that you take the time to answer any questions your child may have. Children will respond differently to today's information. Some children may not exhibit feelings of sadness or have questions about death or about the incident for several weeks or months, if at all. I feel you know best how to handle this information with your child. If you do choose to talk further with your child, please remind him or her, that we have people available to help. You may also want to reassure your child they will always be taken care of.

If I can be of any assistance, or help answer any questions, please feel free to give me a call.

Sincerely,

Shelly McBride, Principal

Statement read to students at Central Elementary:

We have some very sad information to discuss this morning. A Central Elementary student died unexpectedly at his home in a fire. We know that this comes as a shock to all of you, and most of us will be very sad during the day today. We have lots of supportive adults here today to help if you need to talk to anyone or have any questions. Feeling sad and upset and having questions is completely normal. Please let your teacher or any adult here know that you need to talk or have questions.

---

**Superintendent's Office**  
410 East Prairie Ave.  
White Pigeon, MI 49099-8150  
Office: 269-483-7676  
Fax: 269-483-2256

**White Pigeon HS/MS**  
410 East Prairie Ave.  
White Pigeon, MI 49099-8150  
Office: 269-483-7679  
Fax: 269-483-8742

**Athletic Department**  
410 East Prairie Ave.  
White Pigeon, MI 49099-8150  
Office: 269-483-7679  
Fax: 269-483-2800

**Central Elementary**  
305 East Hotchin  
White Pigeon, MI 49099-9709  
Office: 269-483-7107  
Fax: 269-483-8432

---

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR RECOVERY

Trying some of the following hints may help to alleviate the emotional pain associated with a traumatic event. For the next few days anyway you should consider eating and/or drinking less caffeine, salt, sugar, and eating and/or drinking more wholesome foods. Give your body a chance to recover too.

### For Yourself

- Try to get more rest.
- Talk to friends.
- Spend time with loved ones.
- Try not be alone for a while.
- Intrusive thoughts/images are normal. Don't try to fight them, they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible but take breaks.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).
- Try to keep a reasonable level of activity.
- Fight against boredom – physical activity is helpful.
- Reestablish a normal schedule as soon as possible but don't push too hard.
- Express your feelings as soon as they arise.
- Talk to people that you trust and who love you.

### For Family Members and Friends

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with your loved one.
- Offer your assistance and listen actively, even if they don't ask.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Help them with everyday tasks.
- Give them some private time but check on them occasionally.
- Don't take anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them they are "lucky it wasn't worse." They are not consoled by this statement. Instead, tell them you are sorry this happened and that you want to help.
- Don't be surprised if your loved one only wants to talk about the incident with friends, colleagues or other affected by the incident.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

You have experienced a traumatic event (an injury, loss of a loved one or property or a serious threat, or any overwhelming emotional experience). Even though the event may be completed, you may be experiencing or may experience later, some strong emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact, quite normal for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have experienced a tragic event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And, in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months and occasionally longer depending on the severity of the event. With understanding and the support of loved ones, the stress reactions usually pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance from a counselor may be necessary. This does not imply weakness. It simply indicates that the particular traumatic event was just too powerful for the person to manage by themselves.

Here are some very common signs and symptoms of a stress reaction in a traumatized person.

### **Physical**

Nausea  
Upset stomach  
Tremors (lips, hands)  
Feeling uncoordinated  
Profuse sweating  
Chills  
Diarrhea  
Chest pain (should be checked at hospital)  
Rapid heartbeat  
Rapid breathing  
Increased blood pressure  
Headaches  
  
Muscle Aches  
Sleep Disturbances

### **Thinking**

Slowed thinking  
Difficulty making decisions  
Difficulty in problem solving  
Confusion  
Disorientation (especially to places & time)  
Difficulty calculating  
Difficulty in concentration  
Memory problems  
Difficulty in naming common objects and/or persons  
Seeing the event over & over  
Distressing dreams  
Poor attention span

### **Emotional**

Anxiety or Fear  
Guilt or Grief  
Depression  
Sadness  
Feeling lost or abandoned  
Feeling isolated  
Worry about others  
Wanting to hide  
Wanting to limit contact with others  
Anger  
Irritability  
Feeling numb  
Startled  
Shocked

(over)