



May 25, 2022

Dear Helena Public Schools Families,

Our hearts go out to the families and staff at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. We are heartbroken this morning as we prepare to support our kids, both as parents and educators, in the wake of another national tragedy.

Some students may have difficult questions about yesterday's horrible event which comes just 10 days after a shooting in a New York grocery store. We can take steps to help them cope.

One of the most important things we can do is to stick to our normal routines at home, at school, and with sports and other extra-curricular activities. All District operations are normal today and staff are taking age-appropriate steps to help students cope while continuing normal class activities. For our youngest kids, this means class-as-usual and being available for kids who may have heard about the shootings and have questions or emotions to address. For middle school and high school students, there may be more direct discussion to share feelings and check in on each other.

We also can work as individuals to help the young people in our lives through this time:

- Limit or turn off television and Internet access. For older children, monitor their screen time and sites accessed online.
- Answer questions factually and be a good listener. (See resources below)
- Be aware of your own emotional response. Staying calm will help prevent anxiety in your child.
- Practice self-care so you can better support others.
- Watch for behavioral changes.

The District will continue to collaborate with parents, law enforcement, mental health care providers, and local government to identify and implement safety and violence-prevention measures for our schools.

This is going to be a challenging day. If you work in or for our schools in any capacity, the tragedy in Texas has an emotional impact on you. Please don't hesitate to seek the support you need through our Employee Assistance Program, accessible via our staff portal.

As we navigate this difficult time, please check in with those around you and don't hesitate to seek help for a child, a friend, or a co-worker who is struggling.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex W. Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "K" at the end.

Superintendent
Helena Public Schools

Additional Resources:

- [Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers \(nasponline.org\)](https://www.nasponline.org)
- [How to talk to kids after 14 children, teacher killed in Texas school shooting - ABC News \(go.com\)](https://www.abcnews.com)
- [How to talk to children about shootings: An age-by-age guide \(today.com\)](https://www.today.com)
- [How to Talk to Kids About School Shootings | Common Sense Media](https://www.common-sense-media.com)
- [Guidelines-Talking-to-Kids-About-Attacks-Two-Sided-Onesheet-Format.pdf \(schoolcrisiscenter.org\)](https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)
- [Talking to Children about the Shooting | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](https://www.nctsn.org)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, please visit [Lifeline \(suicidepreventionlifeline.org\)](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org); call 1-800-273-TALK; or text MT to 741-741.