



## Suicide Prevention Policy

### Prevention:

1. **Suicide Prevention Coordinator:** The Licensed Mental Health Professional will serve as the Suicide Prevention Coordinator. This person will act as a point of contact at the school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the School Suicide Prevention Coordinator.
2. **Staff Professional Development:** All staff will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The professional development will include additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide, including those living with mental and/ or substance use disorders, those who engage in self harm or have attempted suicide, those in out-of-home settings, those experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native students, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) students, students bereaved by suicide, and those with medical conditions or certain types of disabilities. Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention will be provided to School Employed Mental Health Professionals and School Nurses.
3. Publication and distribution of this policy will be reviewed annually and included in all student and teacher handbooks and on the school website.

### Assessment and Referral:

When a student is identified as potentially suicidal, i.e., verbalizes about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as agitation or intoxication, the act of self-harm occurs, or a student self-refers, the student will be seen and evaluated by the Licensed Mental Health Professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no mental health professional available, a school nurse or administrator will fill this role by contacting the Mobile Crisis Hotline at 800-969-4357.

For youth at risk:

1. School staff will supervise the student one on one to ensure their safety, until professional help is on site and is available to address the crisis.
2. The Head of School and School Suicide Prevention Coordinator will be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.
3. The school's Licensed Mental Health Professional or Head of School will contact the student's parent or guardian, as described in the Parental Notification and Involvement section, and will assist the family with urgent referral. When appropriate, this may include calling the Mobile Crisis Hotline or calling 911.
4. The school's Licensed Mental Health Professional will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care.



### **In School Suicide Attempts:**

In the case of an in-school suicide attempt, the health and safety of the student is paramount. In these situations:

1. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be received, following emergency medical procedures.
2. The School Nurse will supervise the student to ensure their safety.
3. The Deans of School Culture and Climate will ensure the safety of all students and move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
4. If appropriate, the School Nurse will immediately request a mental health assessment for the child.
5. The School Nurse will immediately notify the Head of School regarding in-school suicide attempts.
6. The school's Licensed Mental Health Professional or Head of School will contact the student's parent or guardian.

### **Re-entry procedure:**

Before the child returns to school, the school's Licensed Mental Health Professional needs to have permission from the parents to be in touch with the outside health provider to ensure that re-entry is appropriate at that time. A re-entry meeting will be held with the Head of School, the Licensed Mental Health Professional, Deans of School Culture, and parents to ensure a smooth transition with the appropriate supports both inside and outside the school setting.

1. The parent or guardian may be required by the School's Licensed Mental Health Provider to provide documentation from a mental health care provider that the student has undergone examination and that they are no longer a danger to themselves or others.
2. The Licensed School Mental Health Provider will periodically check in with student to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing concerns.

### **Out-of-school suicide attempts:**

During a school day and off campus, if a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress, the staff member will:

1. The staff member will enlist the assistance of another staff member to contact 911 while maintaining verbal engagement with the student.
2. Inform the school's Licensed Mental Health Professional and Head of School. If the student contacts the staff member and expresses suicidal ideation, the staff member should maintain contact with the student (either in person, online, or on the phone).
3. The school's Licensed Mental Health Professional will Inform the student's parent or guardian.



### **Action Plan Following Death by Suicide:**

1. The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture and Climate will develop an action plan to guide school response following a death by suicide. A meeting of the School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture and Climate will take place in order to implement the action plan. It will take place immediately following news of the death by suicide. The action plan will include the following steps:

**a) Verify the death.** Staff will confirm the death and determine the cause of death through communication with the student's parent or guardian, or police department. If the cause of death has been confirmed as suicide but the parent or guardian will not permit the cause of death to be disclosed, the school will not share the cause of death, but will use the opportunity to discuss death with students.

**b) Assess the situation.** The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture and Climate will meet to prepare the school's response, to consider how severely the death is likely to affect other students, and to determine which students are most likely to be affected. The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture will also consider how recently other traumatic events have occurred within the school community and the time of the death.

**c) Share information.** The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture will meet before the death is officially classified by the coroner's office, to determine how the death should be reported to staff, students, and parents/guardians to ensure there is an acknowledgement that its cause is unknown. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred, preferably in a staff meeting. Write a statement for staff members to share with students. The statement should include the basic fact of the death (without providing details of the manner), and known funeral arrangements. The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture may prepare a letter (with the input and permission from the student's parent or guardian) to send home with students that includes facts about the death, information about what the school is doing.

**d) Avoid suicide contagion.** It should be explained in the staff meeting described above that one purpose of trying to identify and give services to other high risk students is to prevent another death. The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture will work with teachers to identify students who are most likely to be significantly affected by the death. In the staff meeting, the School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture will review suicide warning signs and procedures for reporting students who generate concern.

**e) Initiate support services.** Students identified as being more likely to be affected by the death will be assessed by the school's Licensed Mental Health Professional to determine the level of support needed. The School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture will coordinate support services for students and staff in need of individual and small group counseling as needed. In concert with parents or guardians, School Psychologist, School Counselor, and Deans of School Culture members will refer to community mental healthcare providers to ensure a smooth transition from the crisis intervention phase to meeting underlying or ongoing mental health needs.

**f) Develop memorial plans.** The school should not create on-campus physical memorials (e.g. photos, flowers), funeral services, or fly the flag at half-mast because it may sensationalize the death and



encourage suicide contagion. School should not be canceled for the funeral. Any school-based memorials (e.g., small gatherings) will include a focus on how to prevent future suicides and prevention resources available.

**g) External Communication:** The Head of School or Dean of School Culture and Climate will be the sole media spokespersons. Staff will refer all inquiries from the media directly to the spokesperson. The spokesperson will:

- 1)** Keep the suicide prevention coordinator informed of school actions relating to the death.
- 2)** Prepare a statement for the media including the facts of the death, action plan following death by suicide, and available resources. The statement will not include confidential information, speculation about victim motivation, means of suicide, or personal family information.
- 3)** Answer all media inquiries.