



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
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Purpose

The Board is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and the school community. This policy supports the provision of a comprehensive district program designed to promote behavioral health and prevent suicide.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

Authority

The Board directs the district to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; to establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide attempt or suicide death; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

The district shall notify employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the district's website.[\[1\]](#)

Definition

Behavioral health – the promotion of emotional health; the prevention of mental illnesses and substance use disorders; and treatment and services for substance abuse, addiction, substance use disorders, mental illnesses and/or mental disorders.

Guidelines

The district shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION [\[1\]](#)

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources.

Lessons shall:

1. Contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.
2. Inform students about broader behavioral health issues such as depression and substance abuse, as well as specific risk factors, protective factors and warning signs for suicide (throughout grades 6-12).
3. Encourage students to seek help for themselves or their peers, including when concerns arise via social media or other online forum, and to avoid making promises of confidence when they are concerned about the safety of a peer (throughout grades K-12).

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All district employees shall receive information about risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide awareness and prevention.

As part of the district's professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in a minimum of four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.[\[1\]](#)[\[6\]](#)

Additional professional development in suicide risk screening and crisis intervention may be provided to specialized staff and school behavioral health professionals such as district crisis counselor, designated administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, district social workers and school nurses.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

The district may provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION [\[1\]](#)

The methods of prevention utilized by the district include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

In support of the district's suicide prevention mission, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the building principal or other appropriate authority when it is in good faith protecting the welfare of a child or others. [\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)

Suicide Prevention Coordinators

*District-Wide – **Assistant Superintendent***

A district-wide suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Superintendent. This may be an existing district employee. The district suicide prevention coordinator shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy.

*Building Level – **School Principal***

Each building principal will serve as the school suicide prevention coordinator to act as a point of contact in each school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation.

Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with suicide risk factors or warning signs is crucial to the district's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, district employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicide risk factors and warning signs.

Suicide risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

- Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
 - Depression.
 - Substance abuse or dependence.
 - Previous suicide attempts.
 - Self-injury.
- Personal Characteristics:
 - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
 - Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
 - Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
 - Impulsivity/Risk-taking/Recklessness.
- Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:
 - Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
 - Disciplinary or legal problems.
 - Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
 - School or work issues.
 - Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

- Exposure to peer suicide.
- Family Characteristics:
 - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
 - Family mental health problems.
 - Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
 - Parental-Child relationship.

Warning signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

Referral Procedures

Any district employee who observes a student exhibiting a **warning sign** for suicide or has another indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for suicide risk screening and intervention in accordance with district procedures.

In the absence of a **warning sign** for suicide, students demonstrating **suicide risk factors** that appear to be adversely impacting the student may be referred to a school counselor and/or Student Assistance Program for support and follow-up.

Documentation

The district shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and suicide risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION [\[1\]](#)

The methods of intervention utilized by the district include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in school, suicide attempts outside of school, and suicide death. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of a safety plan for students during the school day identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

A district-approved suicide risk screening tool may be used by trained behavioral health staff such as counselors, psychologists and social workers.

Parents/Guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by the school and informed of crisis and community resources. If the school suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, school staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.[5]

The district shall identify behavioral health service providers to whom students can be referred for further suicide risk screening and/or assessment and assistance.

Behavioral health service providers – may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community behavioral health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and primary care providers.

If the student is identified as being at increased risk of suicide, the district shall create a new, or update a previous, safety plan to support the student and the student's family. The safety plan should be developed collaboratively with input from the student and reviewed with the student's family.

Students With Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[3][11][12][13][14]

If a student is identified as being at risk for suicide or attempts suicide and the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[3][11][12][13][14]

Documentation

The district shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the course of intervention, suicide risk screening and follow-up, including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians and behavioral health service providers.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE ATTEMPT OR SUICIDE DEATH [1]

The district shall maintain trained Crisis Response/Crisis Intervention personnel. These individuals may include, but not be limited to, designated administrators, school counselors, school nurse, school psychologist, social worker, School Police Officers, members of the Student Assistance Program Team, and others as designated by the district such as community behavioral health agency resources.

Response to Suicide Attempt

Methods of response to a suicide attempt utilized by the district include, but are not limited to:

1. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response personnel.
2. Notifying students, employees and parents/guardians.
3. Working with families.
4. Collaborating with community providers.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event.

Re-Entry Procedures

A student's excusal from school attendance after a behavioral health crisis and the student's return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.[3][11][12][13][15][16][17]

Prior to a student returning to school after a behavioral health crisis, a district-employed behavioral health professional, the building principal or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of the student and, if appropriate, meet with the student to ensure the student's readiness to return to school and to create an individual re-entry plan.

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated district employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside behavioral health care providers, and encourage their involvement in the re-entry meeting.

The designated district employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to monitor the student's progress, facilitate the transition back into the school community and address any concerns.

Re-entry of a student with a disability requires coordination with the case manager to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[3][11][12][13][14]

Response to Suicide (Postvention).

Upon confirmation of a suicide death, the district shall immediately implement established postvention procedures which shall include methods for informing the school community; identifying and monitoring at-risk youth; and providing resources and supports for students, staff and families.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide death.

REPORT PROCEDURES [1]

Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians and behavioral health service providers.

When a district employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.

As stated in this policy, district employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.

The suicide prevention coordinator may provide the Superintendent with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to guidance counselors, district behavioral health professionals and school nurses.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES [1]

National:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT 741-741** or visit <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>

Pennsylvania:

- [List of Crisis Intervention contact information by county](#)
- [List of County CASSP and Children's Behavioral Health Contact Persons](#)
- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources

National and State Organizations

National:

- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): <http://www.suicidology.org/>

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): <https://www.afsp.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): <http://www.sprc.org/>

Pennsylvania:

- Prevent Suicide PA: <http://www.preventsuicidepa.org/>
- Jana Marie Foundation: <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/>
- Aavidum: <http://aavidum.com/cms/>
- Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center)
<https://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/STAR-Center-Home/1/Default.aspx>
- Pennsylvania Department of Education www.education.state.pa.us