

5300 **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION**

1. The School District recognizes the prevalence of youth suicide on a national level. The School District supports efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; protocols for administering youth suicide awareness and prevention education to staff and students; methods of prevention of suicide; methods of intervention for individuals identified as being at risk for committing suicide; methods of responding to a student or staff suicide or suicide attempt; reporting procedures and recommended resources on youth suicide awareness and prevention programs.

2. Definition.

Professional Educator – an individual who holds a Pennsylvania teacher, educational specialist or administrative certification or letter of eligibility.

3. Protocols for administering youth suicide awareness and prevention education to staff and students.

A. The School District will develop an age-appropriate curriculum, which discusses youth suicide awareness and prevention. The School District may incorporate curriculum developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education pertaining to youth suicide awareness and prevention into its existing instructional program.

B. All employees of the School District, including but not limited to, administrators, teachers, secretaries, coaches, school nurses, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers shall receive information pertaining to risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referral resources, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. Furthermore, all bus and van drivers employed by independent contractors to transport students of the School District and all student teachers shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referral resources, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

C. The School District shall include in its professional development plan four (4) hours of training in youth suicide awareness and prevention every five (5) years for all professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades 6 through 12.

4. Methods of prevention of suicide.

A. All employees of the School District are required to report any student at risk of committing suicide to a building principal, a guidance counselor, or a school nurse. The Superintendent of the School District, in consultation with the School District's Student Support Team, will designate a Suicide Prevention Coordinator. This Coordinator will assist the building principals pertaining to issues regarding suicide prevention. All employees of the School District must, whenever they learn that a student is planning to commit suicide or is making an overt attempt to commit suicide, immediately report and/or escort the student in question to the guidance office, the building principal's office, or to the school nurse's office.

B. Seriousness of suicidal threats.

Students who either verbally communicate an intention to commit suicide or demonstrate an intent to commit suicide must be viewed with the utmost seriousness. When such behavior is reported, the guidance counselor, the school nurse, or the building principal will assess the student's level of risk with the School District's Suicide Prevention Coordinator. In compliance with the State Board of Education Regulations set forth at 22 Pa. Code Section 12.12.(b), information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents or guardians, the principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is clearly in jeopardy.

C. Identification of risk factors for suicide:

- (1) Feelings of hopelessness,
- (2) A detailed suicide plan,
- (3) Written statements discussing suicide,
- (4) History of a previous suicide attempt,
- (5) Self-destructive lifestyle, such as drug or alcohol abuse or dependence,
- (6) Low self-esteem,
- (7) Impulsive behavior,
- (8) Loneliness,
- (9) Depression,
- (10) Disruption of a family relationship, such as death of a family member or divorce and

(11) Mental health issues.

5. Methods of intervention.

A. Parents/guardians of a student, who may be at risk for committing suicide, shall be notified by the School District as soon as possible. If the School District suspects that the student's risk of suicide is due to abuse or neglect by a parent/guardian, the School District must immediately notify the Office of Children and Youth.

B. The School District shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process, including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians, and mental health service providers.

C. The School District's Suicide Prevention Coordinator will develop procedures that address an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

D. The School District will provide students and/or their parents/guardians with contact information for mental health service organizations, which may provide additional assistance to the student and/or his or her family.

6. Methods of responding to a student or employee suicide or suicide attempt.

Development of a plan by the Superintendent to notify students, employees and parents/guardians of students enrolled in the School District of the suicide or suicide attempt. The plan will also involve the Superintendent's response to the media, if necessary. The Superintendent will develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide or an attempt to commit suicide on property of the School District, on a school transportation vehicle, or during a school-sponsored activity or event.

7. Reporting procedures.

Effective documentation is necessary in ensuring the safety of the student and also ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians and mental health service providers. All School District employees are responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response. The School District's Suicide Prevention Coordinator will provide the Superintendent with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Also, information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to guidance counselors and school nurses. All employees of the School District must respect the confidentiality rights of students, but should not permit the issue of confidentiality to interfere in the case of a life-threatening situation involving a student or an employee of the School District.

8. Recommended resources on youth suicide awareness and prevention programs.

The School District shall post suicide prevention resources, which includes current contact information for such resources, on the School District's publicly accessible Internet website.

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