

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

**Youth
Self-Injurious
Behavior
and
Suicide Prevention,
Intervention, and
Postvention
Policy**

8/2017

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention Program Abstract

California Education Code (EC) Section 215, as added by Assembly Bill 2246, (Chapter 642, Statutes of 2016) mandates that the Governing Board of any local educational agency (LEA) that serves pupils in grades seven to twelve, inclusive, adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Program includes all students, Pre-K through 12th Grades. The Program is based on the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Policy and the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Procedures Manual. The Program addresses the needs of high-risk groups, including suicide awareness and prevention training for teachers and staff members, and ensures that our school employee acts within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential and employment.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and an even greater amount of youth consider (17 percent of high school students) and attempt suicide (over 8 percent of high school students) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Schools are in a unique position to teach and reinforce resiliency skills, identify at-risk students and adults, and provide appropriate prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies. A comprehensive program that implements a systematic, data-based approach has the potential to increase both emotional and academic performance stability.

After careful review of current suicide programs, protocols, and policies available from city, county, and statewide school districts and related government entities, an adaptation of the California Department of Education 'Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy' and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) suicide protocol was used and further developed to meet the needs of Vaughn Next Century Learning Center's population. Other information has been included in both the Policy and the Procedures Manual; an effort has been made to provide credit to contributors. The Procedures Manual will serve as a uniform tool for trained and certificated school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school administrators when assessing a person for suicidal risk, intervention, and continued safety.

The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center (Vaughn NCLC) Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Policy and the Procedures Manual will be reviewed and updated periodically by members of the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team and will include information regarding on-going systematic and data-based training and assistance for students and staff at each campus. The Policy is separate from the Procedures Manual. However, the Policy and the Procedures Manual are intended to be used by trained and certificated school-based professionals in conjunction and collaboration with each other as well as with trained mental health professionals outside of Vaughn NCLC.

The goals of the Vaughn NCLC Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention Policy and Procedures Manual are to:

- ⇒ Increase the knowledge of at-risk indicators;
- ⇒ Provide strategies to increase and reinforce resiliency factors;
- ⇒ Provide a user friendly and standardized concerned persons' referral protocol;
- ⇒ Provide a standardized prevention, intervention, and postvention protocol that includes cooperation and collaboration with outside agencies and a more overall, protective environment for potential existing, returning, and reoccurring students with self-injurious and/or suicidal thoughts and/or ideation.

The Vaughn NCLC 'Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Policy' and the Vaughn NCLC 'Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Procedures Manual' were collaboratively developed by the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team which includes:

School Psychologists: Francisco Uribe, Diana Jacinto, and Suzanne Bornstein
School Counselors: Nancy Linares-Herrera, Nancy Rocha, Carmen Velasquez,
Melanie Jimenez, Heidi Valdez, and Lilian Luna
School Social Worker: Arturo Chavez

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Policy

The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center (Vaughn NCLC) (“the District”) and its Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that an even greater amount of youth consider (17 percent of high school students) and attempt suicide (over 8 percent of high school students) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

The possibility of suicidal ideation and suicide requires vigilant attention from all of our school staff. As a result, we at Vaughn NCLC are ethically and legally responsible for providing an appropriate and timely response in preventing and intervening in suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths. We continually strive to create safe and nurturing learning environments that minimize suicidal ideation in our students.

Recognizing that it is the duty of Vaughn NCLC and all of its schools to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students, this policy aims to safeguard students and staff against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for students, staff, and families affected by suicide attempts and loss. As it is known that the emotional wellness of students greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of students.

This policy is based on research and best practices in suicide prevention, and has been adopted with the understanding that suicide prevention activities increase help-seeking behavior, identify those at risk of suicide, decrease suicidal behaviors, and decrease suicide risk. Empirical evidence refutes a common belief that talking about suicide can increase risk or “place the idea in someone’s mind.”

In an attempt to reduce suicidal ideation and behavior and its impact on students and families, the Executive Director or Designee (Anita Zepeda or Suzanne Bornstein) shall insure collaborative development of strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. These strategies shall include professional development for all school personnel in all job categories who regularly interact with students and/or are in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, including substitute teachers, volunteers (including interns), cafeteria and custodial staff, expanded learning staff (after-school personnel), and other individuals in regular contact with Vaughn NCLC students such as school-based tutors, security staff, and coaches.

The Executive Director or Designee (Anita Zepeda or Suzanne Bornstein) shall insure the collaborative development and implementation of preventive strategies and intervention procedures that include the following:

Overall Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention

The Executive Director or Designee (Anita Zepeda or Suzanne Bornstein) shall attempt to include and involve school-employed certificated mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, and school social worker), administrators, other school staff members, parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s), students, school nurse(s), local health

agencies and professionals, law enforcement, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the Vaughn NCLC strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. Vaughn NCLC endeavors to work in conjunction with local community-based organizations, local government agencies, and other community supports to identify additional resources (e.g., Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services, Valley Coordinated Children's Services, Los Angeles Police Department, etc.)

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, Vaughn NCLC shall appoint an individual (or team) to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for the District. In addition, each campus shall identify at least one trained Mental Health Team member to serve as the liaison to the District's suicide prevention point of contact, and coordinate and implement suicide prevention activities on their specific campus. This policy shall be reviewed and revised as indicated, at least annually in conjunction with the previously mentioned community stakeholders.

Resources:

- The K–12 Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention has been created to help schools comply with and implement AB 2246, the Pupil Suicide Prevention Policies. The Toolkit includes resources for schools as they promote youth mental wellness, intervene in a mental health crisis, and support members of a school community after the loss of someone to suicide.

Additional information about this Toolkit for schools can be accessed on the Heard Alliance Web site at www.heardalliance.org/.

Prevention

A. Messaging about Suicide Prevention

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, Vaughn NCLC along with its partners has critically reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide.

Resources:

- For information on public messaging regarding suicide prevention, see the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Web site at <http://suicidepreventionmessaging.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/>
- For information on engaging the media regarding suicide prevention, see the Your Voice Counts Web page at <http://resource-center.yourvoicecounts.org/content/making-headlines-guide-engaging-media-suicide-prevention-california-0>
- For information regarding how to use social media for suicide prevention, see the Your Voice Counts Web page at <http://resource-center.yourvoicecounts.org/content/how-use-social-media>

B. Suicide Prevention Training and Education

The Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team, along with its collaborative partners, is committed to carefully reviewing and updating current staff professional developments and/or trainings to ensure promotion of an appropriate mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

Trainings shall be provided for all school staff members and other adults on campus including, but not limited to, substitutes and itinerant staff, volunteers, interns, school-based tutors, coaches, and expanded learning (after-school) staff.

Training(s):

- At least annually, all Vaughn NCLC staff shall receive training on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, suicide prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention.
- All suicide prevention trainings shall be offered under the direction of school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, and/or school social worker) who have received advanced training specific to suicide and may benefit from collaboration with one or more county and/or community mental health agencies. Staff trainings may be adjusted year-to-year based on current professional development activities and emerging best practices.
- At a minimum, all staff shall participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (e.g., identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention, etc.) at the beginning of their employment. Continuously employed staff members shall attend a minimum of one-hour per school year of general suicide prevention training as assigned by the Director of Operations. Core components of the general suicide prevention training shall include:
 - Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors;
 - How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide;
 - How to respond appropriately to the youth who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant adult supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and an immediate referral to a member of the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team for a suicide risk assessment. The emphasis is to be on the immediately referral (same day) of any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide for assessment while staying under constant monitoring by an adult staff member;
 - Emphasis on reducing stigma associated with mental illness and that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide;
 - Reviewing the data annually to look for any patterns or trends of the prevalence or occurrence of suicide ideation, attempts, or death (e.g., data from the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey [Cal-SCHLS] may also be analyzed to identify school climate deficits and drive program development. See the Cal-SCHLS Web site at <http://cal-schls.wested.org/>)

- In addition to initial staff orientations regarding the core components of suicide prevention, ongoing annual staff professional development for all staff may include the following components:
 - The impact of traumatic stress on emotional and mental health;
 - Common misconceptions about suicide;
 - School and community suicide prevention resources;
 - Appropriate messaging about suicide (correct terminology, safe messaging guidelines, etc.);
 - Emphasis on stigma reduction and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide;
 - The factors associated with suicide (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, etc.);
 - How to identify youth who may be at risk of suicide;
 - Appropriate ways to interact with a youth who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal. Specifically, how to talk with a student about their thoughts of suicide and, based on district guidelines, how to respond to such thinking; how to provide additional and follow-up support based on district guidelines;
 - District-approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including multi-tiered systems of support and referrals). Such procedures should emphasize that the suicidal student should be constantly supervised by an adult staff member until a suicide risk assessment is completed;
 - District-approved procedures for responding to the aftermath of suicidal behavior and possible suicidal postvention.
- The training(s) may include additional information regarding groups of students judged by the school, and available research, to be at elevated risk for suicide. These groups may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Youth affected by suicide;
 - Youth with a history of suicide ideation or attempts;
 - Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse disorders;
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth;
 - Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care;
 - Youth who have suffered traumatic experiences;

Resources:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to young people showing signs of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care. YMHFA is an 8-hour interactive training for youth-serving adults without a mental health background. See the Mental Health First Aid Web page at <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/course-types/youth/>
- Free YMHFA Training is available on the CDE Mental Health Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp>
- SafeTALK is a half-day alertness training that prepares anyone over the age of fifteen, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper. See the LivingWorks Web page at <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk/>
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. See the LivingWorks Web page at <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/>
- Kognito At-Risk is an evidence-based series of three online interactive professional development modules designed for use by individuals, schools, districts, and statewide agencies. It includes tools and templates to ensure that the program is easy to disseminate and measures success at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. See the Kognito Web page at <https://www.kognito.com/products/pk12/>

C. Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Employees of Vaughn NCLC and their community partners must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license.

While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting.

In addition, treatment of the mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide.

D. Specialized Staff Training (Assessment)

Additional and current professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to all certificated mental health professionals (school counselors, school psychologists, and school social worker) employed by Vaughn NCLC.

Resource:

- Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR) is a one-day training workshop for behavioral health professionals based on the latest research and designed to help participants provide safer suicide care. See the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at <http://www.sprc.org/training-events/amsr>

E. Student Participation and Education

The Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team continues to carefully search out and review available age-appropriate student curricula as it endeavors to ensure the promotion of the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

Once an appropriate student curricula has been identified, the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team (school counselors, school psychologists, and school social worker), along with possible collaboration and consultation with local county and/or community mental health agencies, will insure that our students shall:

- Receive developmentally appropriate and current student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress;
- Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding the District's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.
- The content of the education may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma;
 - How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with mental health and suicide issues in oneself and others;
 - Help-seeking strategies for oneself and others, including how to engage school-based and community resources and refer peers for help;
 - Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
 - Appropriate guidelines and information regarding confidentiality and its limits.

It is possible that student-focused suicide prevention education may be incorporated into the Vaughn NCLC classroom curricula (e.g., health classes, freshman orientation classes, science, physical education, etc.).

Vaughn NCLC supports the creation and implementation of age-appropriate programs and/or activities on campus that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Weeks, Peer Counseling Programs, Freshman Success Programs, and National Alliance on Mental Illness on Campus High School Clubs).

Resources:

- Teen Line offers trainings for educators and administrators, students and parents. Teen Line works in collaboration with the Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services and is a Healthy Communities Partner of Cedars-Sinai. See the Teen Line website at www.teenlineonline.org
- More Than Sad is school-ready and evidence-based training material, listed on the national Suicide Prevention Resource Center's best practices list, specifically designed for teen-level suicide prevention. See the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Web page at <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/more-than-sad/>
- Break Free from Depression (BFFD) is a 4-module curriculum focused on increasing awareness about adolescent depression and designed for use in high school classrooms. See the Boston Children's Hospital Web page at <http://www.childrenshospital.org/breakfree>
- Coping and Support Training (CAST) is an evidence-based life-skills training and social support program to help at-risk youth. See the Reconnecting Youth Inc. Web page at <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/programs/cast/>
- Students Mobilizing Awareness and Reducing Tragedies (SMART) is a program comprised of student-led groups in high schools designed to give students the freedom to implement a suicide prevention on their campus that best fits their school's needs. See the SAVE Web page at <https://www.save.org/what-we-do/education/smart-schools-program-2/>
- Linking Education and Awareness for Depression and Suicide (LEADS) for Youth is a school-based suicide prevention curriculum designed for high schools and educators that links depression awareness and secondary suicide prevention. LEADS for Youth is an informative and interactive opportunity for students and teachers to increase knowledge and awareness of depression and suicide. See the SAVE Web page at <https://www.save.org/what-we-do/education/leads-for-youth-program/>

Intervention, Assessment, Referral

A. Staff

Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team members who have received advanced training in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (Suzanne Bornstein and Carmen Velasquez) shall be designated as the Primary and Secondary Suicide Prevention Liaisons, respectively, for the District. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they shall promptly notify their campus's Mental Health Team member who may, in turn, notify the District's Primary designated Suicide Prevention Liaison. If this Primary Suicide Prevention Liaison is unavailable, the staff may promptly notify the District's Secondary Suicide Prevention Liaison.

- Under normal circumstances, the District's Primary and/or Secondary Liasons shall notify the campus administrator and a school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker (IF different from the Primary and Secondary Suicide

Prevention Liasons). The names, titles, and campus location information of our Mental Health Team members shall be available to all staff members and be prominently available on the Vaughn NCLC Web site(s).

- Primary Suicide Prevention Liason = Suzanne Bornstein, School Psychologist
 - Located on the MIT campus in Room # 54 @ 818-686-7801
- Secondary Suicide Prevention Liason = Carmen Velasquez, School Counselor
 - Located on the MIT campus Counseling Office @ 818-686-7827

The Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team members location information is as follows:

Nancy Linares-Herrera, School Counselor @ VISA High School
Nancy Rocha, School Counselor @ VISA High School
Carmen Velasquez, School Counselor @ MIT Middle School
Melanie Jimenez, School Counselor @ MIT Middle School
Heidi Valdez, School Counselor @ Mainland & G3 Elementary Schools
Lilian Luna, School Counselor @ Pandaland Elementary School
Arturo Chavez, School Social Worker @ Vaughn Community Center & All Campuses
Francisco Uribe, School Psychologist @ MIT Panda Clinic & All Campuses
Suzanne Bornstein, School Psychologist @ MIT Panda Clinic & All Campuses
Diana Jacinto, School Psychologist @ MIT Panda Clinic & All Campuses

- If the student is in imminent danger (e.g., is on a rooftop, has access to a gun, or in other unsafe conditions), a call shall be made to 911.

Once a call to 911 has been made, the school administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, and/or school social worker, shall then notify, if appropriate and in the best interest of the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) as soon as possible.

NOTE: Determination of notification to parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) should follow a formal initial risk assessment performed by a member of the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team member and/or community mental health partner such as a qualified therapist working in conjunction with Vaughn NCLC (e.g., Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services) to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.

Then, as appropriate, follow the directions found in the Vaughn NCLC Youth Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Procedures Manual.

- Students experiencing suicidal ideation shall not be left unsupervised by an adult at all times.
- The referral process should be prominently disseminated to all staff members in order that they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and local community-based resources.

- The Executive Director or Designee (Anita Zepeda or Suzanne Bornstein) shall assist the Vaughn Mental Health Team in facilitating crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications if a suicide occurs or an attempt is made by a student or adult on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

➤ **BEFORE and/or AFTER SCHOOL HOURS** ~ IF staff is made aware of a student's possible suicide ideation and/or concerning behaviors **before or after school hours**, please contact the on-site administrator at your campus.

B. Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

Information regarding the Vaughn NCLC mental health referral process is being made available via the school's website to all parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s), so they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and local community-based resources.

C. Students

Students are continually encouraged to notify a staff member when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they suspect or have knowledge of another Vaughn NCLC student's emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or attempt.

- Information regarding age-appropriate crisis intervention procedures, including counseling and other support systems, is currently being updated and to be provided to all students.
- A Vaughn Mental Health Team member is to be immediately contacted and the student is to remain with an adult, continually supervised, until they can meet with the Mental Health Team member.

D. Parental Notification and Involvement

Each campus within Vaughn NCLC, in collaboration with the Vaughn Mental Health Team, shall attempt to ensure continuing care for the student identified to be at risk of suicide.

The following steps should be followed to ensure continuity of care:

- After a referral is made for an at-risk student, school staff shall verify with the parent/ guardian/caregiver that follow-up treatment has been accessed. Parent(s)/ guardian(s)/caregiver(s) will be required to provide documentation to the school of care for the student.
- If parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at-risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the school site Mental Health Team member (or other appropriate school staff member) will meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues, etc.) and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of the importance of care. If follow-up care for the student is still not provided, appropriate school staff should consider contacting

the Los Angeles County *Department of Children and Family Services* (DCFS) - Child Protection Service - Hotline to report the neglect of the youth (**DCFS 800-540-4000**).

E. Action Plan for In-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt is made during the school day on campus, it is important to remember that the health and safety of the student and those around him/her is critical. The following steps should be implemented:

- Remain calm, remember the student may be overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed;
- Move all other students out of the immediate area;
- Immediately contact the site administrator, Mental Health Team member, and/or suicide prevention liaison who will contact Valley Coordinated Services, if applicable;
- Call 911 and give them as much information about any suicide note(s), media threat(s), medications taken, and access to weapons, if applicable;
- If needed, provide medical first aid until a medical professional is available;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) should be contacted as soon as possible;
- Do not leave the student alone, even if they need to go to the restroom (provide adult supervision, respectfully, at all times);
- Listen and prompt the student to talk;
- Review options and resources of people who can help;
- Be comfortable with moments of silence as you and the student will need time to process the situation;
- Provide comfort to the student respectfully;
- Promise privacy and help, and be respectful, but do not promise confidentiality;
- Student should only be released to parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) or to a person who is qualified and trained to provide appropriate help.

F. Action Plan for Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt by a Vaughn NCLC student is made outside of Vaughn NCLC's property and jurisdiction, it is crucial that Vaughn NCLC and its personnel protect the privacy of the student and maintains confidential actions and a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the student. The following steps should

be implemented by the Executive Director and/or site administrator in collaboration and/or conjunction with the Vaughn NCLC Mental Health Team member(s):

- Contact the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) and offer support to the family;
- Discuss with the family how they would like the school to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students;
- Obtain permission from the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis is correct;
- Designate a staff member to handle media requests (e.g., Anita Zepeda, Executive Director);
- Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students and staff members;
- Offer to the student and parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) steps for re-integration to school.

G. Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis

It is crucial that careful steps are taken to help provide the mental health support for ALL students and to monitor their actions for any signs of self-harm or suicidal ideation. The following steps should be implemented after the crisis has happened:

- Treat every threat with seriousness and approach with a calm manner; make the student a priority;
- Listen actively and non-judgmentally to the student. Let the student express his or her feelings and thoughts;
- Acknowledge the feelings and thoughts and do not argue with the student;
- Offer hope and let the student know every effort will be made to insure that they are safe and that help is provided. Do not promise confidentiality or cause stress;
- Remain calm and get the student to a trained mental health professional, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker or designated staff to further support the student;
- Keep close contact with the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) and mental health professionals working with the student.

H. Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt and/or Hospitalization

A student who threatened or attempted suicide is at a higher risk for suicide in the months following the crisis. Having a streamlined and well planned re-entry process ensures the safety and wellbeing of students who have previously attempted suicide and reduces the

risk of another attempt. An appropriate re-entry process is an important component of suicide prevention. Involving students in planning for their return to school provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. Vaughn NCLC has specific Student/School Re-Entry Guidelines and a School / INDIVIDUALIZED Student Safety Re-Entry Plan (often referred to as the “Student Safety Plan”) which is generally facilitated by the on-site School Counselor in collaboration with the School Psychologist.

The following steps shall be implemented upon re-entry to school:

- A student returning to school following hospitalization, including psychiatric and drug or alcohol inpatient treatment (e.g., 5150), MUST have written permission by their health care provider to attend school.
- Upon returning to school following a mental health hospitalization (5150), the school site administrator or designee MUST hold a re-entry meeting with key support staff, parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s), and the student to facilitate a successful transition. (See Student Re-entry Guidelines for a checklist of action items to consider and the Vaughn NCLC School / INDIVIDUALIZED Student Safety Re-Entry Plan in the Vaughn NCLC Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Procedures Manual)
- Obtain a written release of information (“ROI”) signed by parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) and all involved medical and mental health providers;
- Confer with student and parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) about any specific requests on how to handle the situation;
- Inform the student’s teachers about possible days of absences;
- Remind staff members regarding the CONFIDENTIALITY of the situation;
- Allow accommodations for student to make up work (be understanding that missed assignments may add stress to student);
- Mental health professionals and/or trusted staff members should maintain ongoing contact to monitor student’s actions and mood;
- Work with parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) to involve the student in an aftercare plan. Follow-up to insure compliance.

I. Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on students and staff. Therefore, it is vital that we are prepared ahead of time in the event of such a tragedy.

Suzanne Bornstein and Carmen Velasquez, the Primary and Secondary Suicide Prevention Liaisons for Vaughn NCLC, in collaboration with the Executive Director (Anita Zepeda) shall ensure that each school site adopts the approved action plan for

responding to a suicide death. The Vaughn NCLC protocol for Responding to a Student Death by Suicide from the Vaughn NCLC Self-Injurious Behavior and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Procedures Manual includes the following immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

- Gather Pertinent Information
 - The site administrator or designee should confirm cause of death is the result of suicide, if this information is available.
 - The site administrator or designee should designate a certificated staff member to be the point of contact with the family of the deceased. Contact should be made within 24 hours, if possible. Information about the cause of death should not be disclosed to the school community until the family has been consulted and has consented to disclosure.

- Notify Staff on a 'Need to Know' Basis
 - Vaughn Administration Team (including individual school's administrators)
 - School Mental Health Team members
 - Other offices and/or school personnel only as necessary
 - Remind school personnel of the CONFIDENTIALITY of the matter

- Mobilize the Vaughn Crisis Team / Mental Health Team members
 - Concerns and wishes of family members regarding disclosure of the death and cause of death should always be taken into consideration when providing facts to students, staff, and parents.

 - Assess the extent and degree of psychological trauma and impact to the school community.

 - Coordinate an action plan and assign responsibilities.

 - Coordinate a plan to notify staff IN PERSON of the death, once consent is obtained by the family of the deceased:
 - Cautious and sensitive notification of staff is recommended as soon as possible (e.g., emergency meeting before school or after school).
 - To dispel rumors, share only accurate information and all known facts about the death.
 - Emphasize that no one person or event is to blame for suicide. Suicide is complex and cannot be simplified by blaming individuals, drugs, music and/or school.
 - Allow staff to express their own reactions and grief; identify anyone who may need additional support and provide resources (e.g., Our House Grief Support).

 - Coordinate a plan to notify students of the death, once consent is obtained from the family of the deceased:
 - Discuss plan for notification of students in small group settings, such as the classroom. **Do not** notify students using a public announcement system.
 - Provide staff with a scripted notification of death for students, including

- possible reactions, questions, and activities in which students may engage (e.g., writing, drawing, referral to school counselor).
 - Review student support plan, making sure to clarify procedures and locations for crisis counseling.
- Coordinate a plan to notify other Vaughn NCLC student's parent(s)/guardian(s) of the death, once consent is obtained from the family of the deceased. Prepare and disseminate a notification letter for parents.
- Coordinate and define triage procedures for students and staff who may need additional support in coping with the death. Some actions to consider:
 - Identify a lead crisis response staff member to assist with coordination of crisis counseling and support services.
 - Identify locations on campus to provide crisis counseling to students, staff and parents, as needed.
 - Request substitute teachers, as needed.
 - Maintain sign-in sheets and documentation on individuals serviced for follow-up, as needed.
 - Provide students, staff, and/or parents with after-hours resource numbers such as the 24/7 Suicide Prevention Crisis Line @ (877) 727- 4747
- Refer students and/or staff who require a higher level of care for additional services such as Our House Grief Support Center, a community mental health provider, or their health care provider. Indicators of students and staff in need of additional support and/or referral may include the following:
 - Persons with close connections to the deceased (e.g., siblings, relatives, teacher).
 - Persons who experienced a loss over the past six months to a year, a traumatic event, have witnessed acts of violence, or have a history of suicide issues (self or family member).
 - Persons who appear emotionally over-controlled (e.g., a student who was very close to the deceased but who is exhibiting no emotional reaction to the loss) or those who are angry when majority are expressing sadness.
 - Persons unable to control crying.
 - Persons with multiple traumatic experiences may have strong reactions that require additional assistance.
- Consider funeral arrangements for family and school community;
- Respond to memorial requests in respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handed in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered;
- Identify media spokesperson skilled to cover story without the use of explicit, graphic, or dramatic content (go to the Reporting on Suicide.Org Web site at www.reportingonsuicide.org). Research has proven that sensationalized media coverage can lead to contagious suicidal behaviors.
- Utilize and respond to social media outlets:

- Identify what platforms students are using to respond to suicide death
- Identify/train staff and students to monitor social media outlets
- Include long-term suicide postvention responses:
 - Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant event) and how these will be addressed
 - Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased
 - Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide
- Document

The site administrator and/or designee shall maintain CONFIDENTIAL records and documentation of actions taken at the school by completing a Suicide Risk Assessment Checklist (Attachment B) and the Risk Assessment Referral Data (RARD). **Document All Actions in AERIES.**
- Monitor and Manage
 - The site administrator and/or designee, with support from a member of the school Mental Health Team, should monitor and manage the situation as it develops to determine follow up actions.
 - Maintain consistent communication with appropriate parties.
 - Update all actions taken at the school in AERIES, as needed.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

J. Memorials

Memorials or dedications to a student who has died by suicide should not glamorize or romanticize either the student or the death. If students initiate a memorial, the site administrator/designee should offer guidelines for a meaningful, safe approach to acknowledge the loss.

Some considerations for memorials include:

- Memorials should not be disruptive to the daily school routine.
- Monitor memorials for content.
- Placement of memorials should be time limited. For example, they may be kept in place until the services, after which the memorial items may be offered to the family.

K. Social Networking

Students may often turn to social networking sites as a way to communicate information about the death; this information may be accurate or rumored. Many also use social networking as an opportunity to express their thoughts, positive and negative, about the death and/or about their own feelings regarding suicide.

Some considerations in regard to social networking include:

- Encourage parents to monitor internet postings regarding the death, including personal profile pages. Provide assistance, if necessary.

- Social networking sites may contain rumors, derogatory messages about the deceased, or messages that bully students. Such messages may need to be addressed. In some situations, postings may warrant notification to parents and/or law enforcement.

L. Suicide Contagion

Suicide contagion is the process by which one suicide may contribute to another.

Some considerations for preventing suicide contagion are:

- Identify students who may be at an increased risk for suicide, including those who have a reported history of attempts, are dealing with known stressful life events, witnessed the death, are friends with or related to the deceased.
- Provide mental health resources
- Monitor media coverage.

M. School Culture & Events

It is important to acknowledge that the school community may experience a heightened sense of loss in the aftermath of a death by suicide, as significant events transpire that the deceased student would have been a part of, such as culmination, prom or graduation. Depending on the impact, such triggering events may require planning for additional considerations and resources.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All student matters are CONFIDENTIAL and may not be shared, except with those persons who need to know. Personnel with the need to know shall not re-disclose student information without appropriate legal authorization.

Information sharing should be within the confines of Vaughn's reporting procedures and investigative process.

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center will not tolerate retaliation against anyone for filing a complaint or participating in the complaint investigation process.

Resources:

- After a Suicide: A Toolkit for School is a comprehensive guide that will assist schools on what to do if a suicide death takes place in the school community. See the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at <http://www.sprc.org/comprehensive-approach/postvention>

- Help & Hope for Survivors of Suicide Loss is a guide to help those during the bereavement process and who were greatly affected by the death of a suicide. See the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/help-hope-survivors-suicide-loss>
- For additional information on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, see the Mental Health Recovery Services Model Protocol Web page at http://www.mhrsonline.org/resources/suicide%5Cattempted_suicide_resources_for_schools-9/
- Information on school climate and school safety is available on the CDE Safe Schools Planning Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/vp/safeschlplanning.asp>
- Additional resources regarding student mental health needs can be found in the SSPI letter Responding to Student Mental Health Needs in School Safety Planning at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr14ltr0212.asp>