



## **SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY AND INTERVENTION PROTOCOL**

### **I. SUBJECT**

Suicide Prevention Policy and Intervention Protocol for Barstow Unified School District.

### **II. RATIONALE**

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is the second leading cause of death among the youth in the U.S. (CDC.gov, 2014). School personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate assistance.

Suicide is often preventable, especially in situations where agencies support intervention and provide the knowledge, which allows an individual to intervene with a student at risk. Barstow Unified School District will ensure that employees, students, and parents are aware of the resources and procedures available to appropriately respond when concerned about the suicide risk of a student or those experiencing suicidal behaviors and to also understand that seeking help is available and encouraged. It is essential for Barstow Unified School District to establish a culture of seeking and obtaining help for suicidal behaviors and addressing suicidal concerns before a crisis emerges amongst students. Achieving this goal requires a district wide comprehensive, collaborative approach to suicide prevention. No single agency or individual can do this work alone.

### **III. POLICY STATEMENT**

Barstow Unified School District is committed to promoting the health and safety of its students. This suicide prevention policy is intended to raise awareness and provide guidance and resources to employees, students, and parents in carrying out an appropriate response to suicidal behavior or suicidal ideation in the district.

### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

**Youth Mental Health First Aid:** An individual who has completed suicide prevention training to enhance his/her knowledge of resources and who can guide a person who may consider intervening with a colleague in distress.

**Imminent:** Impending; menacingly close at hand; immediate threat.

**Suicide:** Self-inflicted death with evidence (implicit or explicit) of the intent to die.

**Suicide attempt:** A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person intended to kill him/herself.

**Suicidal behavior:** A spectrum of activities related to thoughts and behaviors that include suicidal thinking, making a suicide plan, suicide attempts, and death by suicide.

**Suicide ideation:** Thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.



**Suicide survivor:** Family member, significant other, or acquaintance who has experienced the loss of a loved one due to suicide.

**Unattended Death:** A death that occurs with no one else present.

**Warning Sign(s):** The earliest observable signs that indicate the risk of suicide for an individual.

## V. INTERVENTION PROTOCOL

Barstow Unified School District seeks to offer support and guidance should a student express suicide ideation, show suicidal behavior, or encounters another student expressing suicidal ideation or showing suicidal behavior. While it is impossible to anticipate every scenario, it is the District's intent to strongly encourage staff, students, and parents to act in their best interest, and the best interest of the identified student. The following actions are guides to that end:

### **If you are considering suicide:**

Thoughts of suicide can be very frightening for both you and your family. If you have thoughts of suicide, please seek help immediately from adults on your campus, community, or use the resource numbers available below.

#### Examples of Immediate Warning Signs:

- Thinking or talking about wanting to harm yourself.
- Looking for ways to commit suicide and having the means of committing suicide (pills, knife, gun, etc.)
- Talking or writing about death.
- Feeling overwhelming emotions like rage, anger, or shame.
- Experiencing a serious triggering event like a death or other life-altering issue.
- Tying up loose ends (saying goodbyes, giving away possessions, etc.)

To seek immediate help: *(if calling from a state-owned landline phone, always dial "9" for an outside line)*

- Go to your nearest Crisis Walk-in Center
- Call your Community Crisis Response Team, Ph: (760) 956-2345
- Call (760)734-8093 (Crisis Response Team Hotline-available 24 hours a day staffed by people trained to assess suicide risk; crisis workers are mobile and can go to any site that is safe).
- Call the Employee Assistance Program (24/7) 1-844-207-5465
- Go to the emergency room or Call 911



### Examples of Other Warning Signs

- Acting recklessly or taking risks.
- Increasing your alcohol or drug use.
- Seeing no reason to live.
- Feeling hopeless or trapped.
- Having dramatic mood changes.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, and others.
- Feeling anxious or agitated.
- Retreating to bed to sleep most of the time.

You should consider getting help by: *(if calling from a state-owned landline phone, always dial "9" for an outside line)*

- Confiding in someone you trust (i.e., doctor, clergy, counselor, teacher).
- Calling 1-888-568-1112 (Hotline Available 24 hours a day)
- Calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1800-273-TALK (8255)
- Calling 211 (Can help find resources in California)

### **Helping a student who may be suicidal:**

As a parent, student, or educator, you spend a great deal of time at work, at school, and at home having day-to-day contact with those around you. You observe changes in students' behavior and may see them at critical times in their life. We are often the first to notice that a student is experiencing a crisis, suicidal behavior and/or suicide ideation.

If any stakeholder has reason to believe a student is in danger of suicide, take him/her seriously until it is determined that there is no danger.

When approaching a person who you think may be at imminent risk for suicide, speak to him/her directly, non-judgmentally, and compassionately. Show you care. Depending on your relationship with him or her, you might say:

- You seem to be in great pain; I know where we can get some help.
- I'm frightened/concerned about you based on...(state what you saw or heard).
- Are you considering harming yourself...killing yourself...? Are you thinking about suicide?
- What can I do for you; I want to get you the help you need.
- I want to help; you mean a lot to me.
- You are not alone!



Take immediate and prompt action if the person is showing any of the following examples:

- Expressing a desire to harm him/herself.
- Talking or writing about death or suicide.
- Looking for ways to commit suicide.
- Seeing no reason to live.
- Feeling hopeless.
- Displaying unusual anger, anxiety or agitation.
- Complaining about not sleeping or sleeping all the time.
- Tying up loose ends (saying goodbyes, giving away possessions, etc.)

To seek immediate help: *(if calling from a state-owned landline phone, always dial "9" for an outside line)*

- Bring your concern to the attention of a trusted adult.
- Contact a person at the next level of responsibility.
- Stay with the person (or make sure the person is in a private, secure place with another caring person) until you can get further help.
- Call your Community Crisis Response Team, Ph: (760) 956-2345
- Upon receiving a report of possible suicidal behavior, the manager or supervisor may contact the Human Resources Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper who will offer guidance and support.
- Call 911 (if a student has the means at hand to do self-harm or is out of control).

If you observe that a student may be experiencing drastic behavior changes, such as:

- Feeling hopeless.
- Acting recklessly or taking risks.
- Increasing his/her alcohol or drug use.
- Having dramatic mood changes.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, and others.
- Expressing rage or uncontrolled anger.
- Stating he/she feels like a burden to others or feels trapped.
- Displaying unusual anxiety or agitation.
- Complaining about not sleeping or sleeping all the time.

If you are concerned about the recent alarming behavior changes listed above, it is appropriate to have a private conversation with him/her. Again, depending on your relationship with this person, you might say:



- There seems to be something weighing you down; I would like to talk about it with you.
- You haven't been yourself lately; do you want to talk about it?
- I'm worried; you seem anxious/desperate/detached recently.
- Is there anything wrong that talking with a professional might help?

Encourage the student to: *(if calling from a state-owned landline phone, always dial "9" for an outside line)*

- Confide in a person of trust (i.e., doctor, clergy, counselor, teacher) or mental health professional.
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- Call 1-760-734-8093 (Crisis Response Team Hotline available 24 hours a day by people trained to assess suicide risk; crisis workers are mobile and can go to any site that is safe).
- Call 211 (provides assistance in finding resources in California)

### **Do's and Don'ts of Suicide Prevention**

There are certain "do" and "don't" behaviors that experts recommend using when either approaching someone who appears imminently suicidal or someone who may be considering suicide, or is in a crisis. These "do" and "don't" actions include:

- Take him/her seriously and offer your full attention
- Stay calm and in control of your own emotions, fears, or anger
- Listen, Listen, Listen
- Build Hope
- Speak carefully and slowly
- Be direct
- Be positive and reassuring
- Remove the means of committing suicide (pills, knife, gun) if safe to do so
- Show compassion and concern
- Do not judge
- Don't offer advice
- Don't say you know how they feel
- Don't interrupt
- Don't agree to keep a secret

If a suicide attempt has been made or a person possesses the means to cause harm (gun, knife, medications, etc):

- Call 911 *(if calling from a state owned landline phone; always dial "9" for an outside line)*
- Do not leave the person alone, unless there is a threat of harm to others.



## VI. SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE

For those who have lost a loved one to suicide, getting back into a normal routine can be a positive experience. Depending on the relationship with the deceased and the personality/vulnerability of the student, the student's workspace at school may also be a constant reminder. Some students may feel a sense of responsibility or question if they could have/should have been able to intervene. These students may require support from our school counselors and psychologists. These individuals are available for all stakeholders to work out these emotional responses to suicide. If a suicide occurs on the school site, addressing the grief that follows is important. Often people will feel confused about how they can find support for themselves or provide support to others who are touched by suicide. If several staff members or students are affected, consider a debriefing guided by a CRT counselor or consider encouraging individuals to seek personal help through the outside agencies.

## VII. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

This policy and intervention protocol will be distributed to all persons covered by this policy each September. Information on this policy and suicide awareness and intervention services will be part of the Barstow Unified School District New Employee Orientation and included in the new employee orientation package. In addition, there will be ongoing training and meetings on specific procedures and protocols the “Mental Health Matters in Barstow” team will follow to address crisis concerns and when a suicide intervention for a student is needed (See *Suicide Assessment and Intervention Forms*). BUSD counselors will meet once a month for debriefing and to discuss improvements of counseling interventions, counseling procedures, and suicide prevention/interventions.

All employees are expected to become familiar with this policy.

Barstow Unified will require that twice annually school sites review this policy with teachers, students, and staff.

Remember: There is help for students who are experiencing difficult and overwhelming emotions, and may be going through a crisis.

- You can help prevent suicide.
- Have the courage to get involved.
- Suicide prevention...it's up to all of us!



***Forms and Procedures for BUSD Suicide Intervention Protocol follow:***

1. SUICIDE THREAT ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION FORM
2. SUICIDE INTERVENTION PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NOTIFICATION
3. SUICIDE INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN (INTERNAL FORM)
4. SUICIDE INTERVENTION ACTION PLAN (INTERNAL FORM)
5. “MY SAFETY PLAN”