

December 2017

Dear Parent and Guardians,

In accordance with Act 71 which requires that school districts adopt a suicide awareness and prevention policy and provide professional development in these areas, the Hollidaysburg Area School District enacted Policy 819 pertaining to suicide prevention during the 2015-2016 school year. The district has initiated professional development for staff members. In addition, students will be provided with lessons that are age-appropriate and related to suicide awareness and prevention. In grades 10 – 12, suicide awareness and prevention lessons will be directly taught by the Guidance Counselors beginning in December, 2017. If you have any questions regarding the lessons, please contact your child's Guidance Counselor.

To provide additional information about this serious topic, we have included information directly from Policy 819 including warning signs and resources in the community. It is our hope that this information will facilitate your being able to continue suicide prevention education in your home.

Sincerely,

Francine Endler, Ed.D.
Director of Curriculum

Attachments:

Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Response – Policy #819
Parent Resources

Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Response - Policy #819

Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the district's suicide prevention efforts. To promote

awareness, district employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

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

- Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
 - Significant problems with sleeping and/or eating.
 - Depression.
 - Substance abuse or dependence.
 - Previous suicide attempts.
 - Self injury.
 - Previous referrals to a crisis center.
- Personal Characteristics:
 - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
 - Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
 - Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
 - Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.
 - Giving away possessions.
- 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 suicide.
- Family Characteristics:
 - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
 - Family mental health problems.
 - Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
 - Parental-Child relationship problems.

Warning signs are indications 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.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.
- Statements of wanting to die, having a plan.

Parent Resources

PA 211 – Information Referral for Health and Human Service Needs: Dial 2-1-1

Crisis Intervention Hotline: 946-2141 or 889-2141
Mark Frederick, Supervisor, Central Point of Contact
Altoona Regional Health System, Behavioral Health
501 Howard Ave, Building C, Suite 201
Altoona, PA 16601
Phone: (814) 889-6717

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Contact Altoona: 946-9050

Websites:

Preventsuicidepa.org

Youthsuicidewarningsigns.org