

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

The Board directs all school personnel to share with the administration any observations of student behavior which may be in relation to the possibility of suicide. The administration, in turn, has a responsibility to follow guidelines in Board of Education policy and this regulation on suicide prevention.

In addition, information regarding the 988 crisis line should be made widely available in schools and district offices. Text should note to call 988 if you are in emotional distress and/or you are having suicidal ideations. It should also include that by calling 988, you will be provided with support and connected to resources if needed. In accordance with state statute, staff will include on the student identification card distributed to each student in grades seven to twelve, inclusive, the 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number.

Special Issues in Using Procedures

1. **Administration.** Administration shall mean Principal and/or or Associate/Assistant Principal(s), Director of Counseling and/or Pupil Services Coordinator(s).
2. **Communication.** The building Principal shall maintain communication with the Superintendent of Schools and the Director of Pupil Services concerning all suicide attempts and shall call on the Director of Pupil Services and/or the Director of Counseling for advice on how to proceed as such assistance is needed. In turn the Superintendent will keep the Board informed about suicide related issues as appropriate. All communications must be kept confidential.
3. **Documentation.** All actions taken by school personnel will be carefully documented with factual information, observable behaviors, and actions and placed in the student's supplementary health file.
4. **Contagion.** Sometimes a suicide attempt or suicide will trigger other suicide attempts. The best preventive measure against the contagion effect involves careful identification and monitoring of students who may be in a risk category, efforts to reduce glamorization of the suicide, and carefully planned follow up activities.
5. **Anniversary Dates.** The week, month or year anniversary of the death may trigger a delayed grief reaction or suicide attempts modeled after the first. School personnel should be sensitive to this and intensify student monitoring at these times.
6. **Support.** Building Crisis Team members should be sensitive to each other's needs for support, and it can also be helpful to have an outside professional available during and following crisis periods to "debrief" the team and offer support to individual members as needed. Additional supports can be provided by the Employee Assistant Program and/or similar programs.
7. **Suicide at School.** Most experts agree it is better to keep students at school where adult support systems are available than to send them home where no adult supervisors might be

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

available to them. Students should only be released to their parents or other responsible adults should they ask to leave school early and/or at written parent request. All attempts should be made to release a student directly to an adult (i.e. students should not be permitted to drive themselves home.)

General Procedures During School Hours

School personnel who have identified a potentially suicidal student or who have other reason to believe the student is at risk of suicide (suicidal ideation) must immediately bring the student's name to the attention of the Administration and/or appropriate school employed mental health staff member (School Counselor, School Psychologist, or School Social Worker) even if the student has confided in the staff person and asked the staff person to keep their discussion confidential. In such cases, the staff person would explain that he/she cannot maintain confidentiality under the circumstances.

Appropriate staff members gather background information before contacting a student identified with suicidal ideation - unless there seems to be imminent risk of self-harm. This background check should be done on the same day as the referral and may include:

1. Further discussion with the person who made the referral.
2. Contact other staff members for data on recent student performance.

At the earliest possible moment following the collection of information (this should occur the same day), contact with the student will be made to conduct a risk assessment.

High Risk

The student has the intent to kill himself/herself, a specific plan for how he/she will do it, and immediate access to the method (lethal means); in addition, he/she exhibits feelings consistent with active suicidal ideation. They have been identified as a high risk through the suicidal risk assessment process.

1. A staff member will stay with the student to offer support and provide supervision. In addition, he/she will explain to the student that someone will be contacting parent(s) because of concerns regarding active suicidal ideation.
2. A staff member will notify parents and request that they come to the school immediately. The following points should be covered in the meeting with the parents:
 - a. The seriousness of the situation.
 - b. The need for immediate outside professional help. Such as calling 2-1-1 and/or involvement of the School Resource Officer.

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

- c. The need for continued supervision.
 - d. A request for parent(s) to sign a release of information form for communication between the school and the facility to which the student will be taken, the student's therapist, and other individuals as appropriate.
3. When parents cannot be contacted, or if they refuse to come to the school, and a medical emergency exists, normal procedures will be followed for such emergencies. Administration may contact the School Resource Officer or member of the local law enforcement agency to conduct an immediate crisis assessment to determine if an emergency committal (EC) is required to protect the safety of the student. If parents refuse to come to school, the administration will explain that the school may be required to file a medical neglect report with the Department of Children and Families. In addition, the administration may inform parents that the student will not be accepted back into school until a formal mental health evaluation has taken place.

This exclusion will be made in compliance with state regulations and only if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the student.

4. As a follow-up, a staff member will contact the family to discuss plans for professional assistance and support to the student, and permission for communications between school and therapist will be requested. A safety plan will be developed upon the student's reentry to the school district. The safety plan and all additional paperwork will be sent to the Pupil Service Office and filed in the student's supplementary health file.

Low Risk Situation

The student has some intent to kill himself/herself and has thought about how he/she would do it. He/she has does not access to the lethal means. Although the student may exhibit feelings of suicidal ideation, through the risk assessment process they have been deemed a low risk

1. A staff member will explain to the student that his or her parents will be contacted to arrange for professional help and to develop an appropriate support system. The staff member will offer to speak on the student's behalf.
2. A safety plan will be developed for the student where they will contract for safety with the school employed and/or community based mental health professional.
3. Following the meeting with the student the school employed mental health professional will:
 - a. Contact the student's parents to inform them of the seriousness of the situation and request an immediate meeting the same day where the safety plan will be shared.
 - b. Obtain further information from parents concerning the student's mental health

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

history, including therapy and previous suicidal attempts or threats. If the student is currently being seen by a mental health professional, the school employed mental health professional will ask for parental permission to speak with that professional.

- c. Communicate the need for student to be seen by their treating therapist and/or share the resources of 2-1-1/9-8-8 should the student engage in active suicidal ideation upon leaving school.
- d. If the parent refuses to come to school, the administration will explain that the school should file a medical neglect report with DCF and engage the school resource office as needed for an emergency committal assessment *if required)
- e. As follow up, a team member will contact the family to discuss plans for professional help to the student. The team will meet to develop and/or update the safety plan.

Risk Assessment Documentation

1. The suicidal/homicidal risk assessment form will be completed by the school employed mental health employee the same day of the risk assessment. (i.e. School Counselor, School Psychologist, and/or School Social Worker.) who assumes responsibility for the risk assessment. The report shall include:
 - a. Name of the student
 - b. Name of the staff member(s) involved
 - c. Time and date of risk assessment(s)
 - d. Summary the risk assessment(s)
 - e. Recommendations made to parents, student, and building staff.
 - f. Referral recommendations to community agencies.
 - g. If 2-1-1 is utilized, a copy of the 2-1-1 safety plan should be attached.
2. Copies of this report will be submitted to the Director of Pupil Services and Director of Counseling. The completed form will be filed in students' supplementary health file.
3. Follow-up contact by the school employed mental health staff working with the student will be made to support the family in obtaining the recommended services and provide any additional supports that may be required. If it is determined that the parents have not acted responsibly on behalf of their child, the school employed mental health provider will make a written report to the Department of Children Youth Services in accordance with Board of Education Policy 5141.4.
4. The school employed mental health provider who assumes responsibility for the case will maintain contact with the student's community mental health or medical professionals to support programming needs and follow-up procedures.

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

General Procedures After School Hours

If a staff member has become aware of a potentially suicidal student during after school hours, he/she should consider and decide the following actions:

1. Contact School Administration. Upon contacting School Administration, School Administration will take the following actions:
 - a. Contact parents. This should be done via telephone and not electronically. Information regarding the need to seek support from the student's therapist, 2-1-1 and/or 9-8-8 should be shared. The importance of supervising and/or monitoring the student should be shared.
 - b. If administration is unable to reach the parents, they should contact police, share the concerns, and request and a health and welfare visit.
2. Notify Superintendent and/or Director of Pupil Services of the situation.

Suicide Postvention Procedures

If a student commits suicide, the following procedures shall be followed (Modeled upon NASP PREPaRE Workshop 2: Mental Health Crisis Interventions: Responding to an acute traumatic stressor in schools):

1. The principal or their designee shall contact the family and verify the suicide has occurred, offer sympathy and support, identify others who may need assistance, discuss the postvention response, and discuss the family wishes as it relates to how and what information will be shared. If confirmed a suicide, then communication can proceed indicating death was by suicide only when supported by the family. If unconfirmed, then indicate that the cause of death is still being investigated and information will be passed on once it is verified and received.
2. The Superintendent of Schools, Director of Pupil Services, Director of Counseling, the student's School Counselor, and the School Psychologist(s)/School Social Worker(s) will be notified immediately. The Director of Pupil Services and Director of Counseling will determine if the District Crisis Team needs to be activated.
3. All efforts shall be made to protect the confidentiality of the families involved.
4. The Principal and/or the Director of Pupil Services or Director of Counseling shall convene the Building Crisis Team.
5. The Building Crisis Team shall address the following:

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

- a. Evaluate the suicide's impact on the school and determine the level of crisis response required while ensuring not to over and under respond. Must consider immediate, short term, and long-term needs and monitoring.
 - b. Review agenda for a meeting with all building staff members at the earliest opportunity. The agenda shall consist of but not be limited to the following:
 - i. What teachers should say to students. A written statement shall be prepared for teachers to read to students.
 - ii. How staff can coordinate efforts to screen students experiencing significant adjustment difficulty in school.
 - iii. How, where, and when to refer students over the next several days.
 - iv. Explain that the school employed mental health staff will screen students as they arrive for counseling and assign them to appropriate counselors, depending on the severity of the grief reaction and relationship with the victim or other factors.
 - c. Assign school employed mental health staff to specific student population, i.e., grade level.
 - d. Assign staff (secretaries, paraprofessionals, etc.) to record the names of students who come in for counseling and direct students to the school employed mental health staff.
 - e. Schedule follow-up Building Crisis Team meeting to review and evaluate the response, provide self-care opportunity for the team, and discuss any potential Memorials (Reference BOE Policy 1180).
 - f. Administration and/or Building/District Crisis Team members will contact all building staff members through the most appropriate and direct means available prioritizing conversations over electronic communication.
6. One identified school employed mental health provider be the point person for communication with the family and will consult with the family, their representatives, and/or the clergy who will conduct funeral services, to anticipate the possible impact of the services on the school community. This staff member will be responsible for keeping the principal, administration, and Superintendent informed of the family's wishes.
 7. The Principal and/or their designees will officially inform students and staff of the death. Best practices for reporting on suicides will be utilized as published by Reporting On Suicide.
 8. The Pupil Services Director and/or the Director of Counseling will notify the Regional Crisis Coordinators (ACES) and Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis

Students

Suicide Prevention/Suicide Attempts

Preparedness for additional mental health support. Consider the appropriateness of notification to local clergy.

9. The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be solely responsible for communication with the press. All media contacts with staff will be immediately referred to the Superintendent or his/her designee.
10. The school employed mental health staff shall work closely with teachers and administration to identify students and/or staff who manifest a prolonged grief reaction so that appropriate interventions and/or recommendations can be made.
11. An identified member of the school mental health staff will meet with the family to discuss the family's adjustment and possible sources of guidance and support. This may be, but is not limited to, the staff member identified as the point of communication with the family.
12. The Director of Pupil Services and/or the Director of Counseling will check-in with all school employed mental health staff supporting the crisis response utilizing the principles of Care for the Caregiver.
13. The Superintendent of Schools and Principal will determine appropriate changes in scheduled school events.
14. If the suicide occurs during the summer months, the District/Building Crisis Team shall convene as soon as possible and plan appropriate action.

Suicide Prevention Training

All certified staff members will be trained annually in the identification and assessment of behaviors which may signal suicide potential.