



Youth Suicide Prevention Policy

The Governing Board of The Learning Choice Academy recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that an even greater amount of California's high school students report having considered and attempted suicide. During 2019, 15 percent of California seventh graders and 16 percent of ninth and eleventh graders reported they seriously considered attempting suicide. (California Healthy Kids Survey 2019). The Governing Board is encouraged to review California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys (CaSCHLS) data specific to their students. See the CaSCHLS website at <https://calschls.org/>.

Suicide prevention requires vigilant attention from school communities (all school staff, students, parents) and public members. As a result, school communities have an ethical and legal responsibility to provide appropriate and timely response to suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths. School leaders and staff must ensure their campuses are safe and nurturing environments that mitigate suicidal ideation and behaviors in students and staff and that appropriate procedures, protocols, and supports are well promulgated and easily accessible to all.

Recognizing that it is the responsibility of the school to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students and staff, this policy aims to safeguard against suicide attempts, deaths, and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for students, staff, and families affected by suicidal behavior, attempts, and loss. It is a known fact that emotional wellness is central to all functioning, therefore, it is recommended this policy be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral well-being of students and staff.

This policy is based on research and best practices in suicide prevention and has been adopted with the understanding that positive and nurturing school climates coupled with suicide prevention activities decrease suicide risk, increase help-seeking behavior, identify those who may be suicidal, and help decrease such behaviors. Empirical evidence refutes a common misconception that talking about suicide can increase risk or "place the idea in someone's mind." Therefore, it is critical to address all behaviors directly and in a timely manner. Of significant importance is the education of students to recognize their own mental health, equip them with information and knowledge to solicit help, and learn to recognize symptoms within themselves and their peers.

Understanding the impact school climate has on suicidality is critically important as positive school climates have been linked to lower levels of violence, bullying victimization, and greater perceived safety. School climate is of particular importance since it affects the risk of suicidality among youth. Existing studies reveal adolescents who report perceptions of a more positive school climate are less likely to report suicidality (Cornell & Huang, 2016; La Salle et al., 2017; Marraccini & Brier, 2017). This is most likely due to positive peer and teacher relationships that are promoted in schools with positive school climates along with high levels of safety and social support. The Learning Choice Academy and school leaders underscore the importance of all staff and



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students working together to create safe, respectful, nurturing, and welcoming campuses in which students feel comfortable seeking help for themselves or their peers. Leaders provide opportunities for continuous improvement and monitoring of school climate.

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, The Learning Choice Academy has developed strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. These strategies include professional development for all school personnel (certificated and classified) in all job categories who regularly interact with students or are in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, including substitute teachers, volunteers, expanded learning staff (afterschool), and other individuals in regular contact with students such as crossing guards, tutors, and coaches.

Recognizing that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide, The Learning Choice Academy has developed and implemented preventive strategies and intervention procedures that include the following:

Overall Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention

The Learning Choice Academy consults school-employed professionals. School counselors, psychologists, administrators, other school staff members, parents/guardians/caregivers, students, local health agencies and mental health professionals, first responders, and community organizations in planning, implementing, evaluating, and updating the district's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. The Learning Choice Academy also regularly convenes these stakeholders to review the policy, at a minimum every five years, and update as necessary as required by *EC* Section 215.

Jeff Fechner, Assistant Director

Erika Delgado, Director of Special Education

District Suicide Prevention Crisis Team

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, The Learning Choice Academy created an in-house suicide prevention crisis team consisting of administrators, mental health professionals, relevant staff, parents, and middle and high school students. It is encouraged for each school to identify one staff member to serve as the liaison to the district's suicide prevention crisis team. Additionally, each school site has identified one or two students to represent the student voice on this team.



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The functions of this crisis team are to review mental health related school policies and procedures; provide annual updates on school and district data and trends; review and revise school prevention policies; review and select general and specialized mental health and suicide prevention training; review and oversee staff, parent/guardian, and student trainings; ensuring the suicide prevention policy, protocols, and resources are posted on the district and school websites; and general compliance with *EC* Section 215.

This crisis team also collaborates with community mental health organizations, identifies resources and agencies that provide evidence-based or evidence-informed treatment, helps inform and build skills among law enforcement and other relevant partners, and collaborates to build community response.

Jeff Fechner, Assistant Director

Erika Delgado, Director of Special Education

Diane Barrett, School Counselor

Angelique Bailey, School Counselor

Samantha Peterson, School Counselor

Juzenne Cruz, School Psychologist

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

The Learning Choice Academy has ensured the school employees adhere to *EC* Section 215 which mandates district and school employees and their partners to 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, screen and assess to identify suicide risk, and to provide ongoing supports to youth identified at risk, the care or treatment for suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting.

Prevention

Messaging about Suicide Prevention

The Governing Board of The Learning Choice Academy along with its partners, have thoroughly and regularly reviewed all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe and effective messaging about suicide.

This policy and all related communication, documents, materials, etc. include clear, respectful, people-first language that encourages an environment free of stigma. As part



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of safe messaging for suicide, we use specific terminology when referring to actions related to suicide or suicidal behavior:

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training for School Staff

The Learning Choice Academy along with its partners, have carefully reviewed available staff trainings to ensure the selected curriculum is evidence-based, evidence-informed, and aligned with best practices in suicide prevention.

EC Section 215 mandates LEAs to provide training for staff. The Learning Choice Academy has provided professional development for all school staff members (certificated and classified) and other adults on campus.

- At least annually, all staff receive training on mental health awareness and suicide prevention that includes risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, intervention, referral processes, and postvention. The program(s) or training(s) selected is left at the discretion of the LEA.
- All suicide prevention trainings are to be offered under the direction of school-employed student mental health professionals, who have received advanced training specific in suicide prevention. The district has collaborated with Creating Opportunities in Preventing and Eliminating Suicide (COPES) to review the training materials and content to ensure it is evidence-based, evidence-informed, and aligned with best practices.
- Staff training is reviewed and adjusted annually based on previous professional development activities, emerging best practices, and feedback.
- At a minimum, all staff participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (identification of suicide risk and protective factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention) at the beginning of their employment prior to working with youth.
- The school has ensured training is available for new hires during the school year.
- Previously employed staff members attend a minimum of one-hour general suicide prevention training. Core components of the general suicide prevention training shall include:
 - How to identify youth who may be at risk for suicide including suicide warning signs, risk, and protective factors.
 - Appropriate ways to approach, interact, and respond to a youth who is demonstrating emotional distress or having thoughts of suicide including skill building to ask directly about suicide thoughts.

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- District-approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including programs and services in a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) and referral protocols). Such procedures will emphasize the student should be under constant supervision and immediately referred for a suicide risk assessment.
- District-approved procedures identifying the role educators, school staff, and volunteers play in supporting youth and staff after a suicide or suicide death or attempt (postvention).
- In addition to the core components of suicide prevention, ongoing annual professional development for all staff should include the following:
 - The impact of traumatic stress on emotional and mental health with an emphasis on reducing stigma associated with mental illness and that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
 - Common misconceptions about suicide.
 - School and community mental health and suicide prevention resources.
 - Appropriate messaging about suicide (correct terminology, safe messaging guidelines).
 - Ways to identify youth who may be at risk for suicide including suicide warning signs, risk, and protective factors.
 - Appropriate ways to approach, interact, and respond to a youth who is demonstrating emotional distress or having thoughts of suicide including skill building to ask directly about suicide thoughts and warm handoffs.
 - District-approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including MTSS and referrals). Such procedures will emphasize that the student should be constantly supervised and immediately referred for a suicide risk assessment.
 - District-approved procedures identifying the role educators play in supporting youth and staff after a suicide or suicide death or attempt (postvention).
- The professional development includes additional information regarding groups of students who may be at elevated risk for suicide or groups disproportionately affected by suicide thoughts and behaviors. These groups include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Youth impacted by suicide and youth with a history of suicidal thoughts or behavior.

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- Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
- Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.
- Youth identifying as LGBTQ.
- California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)

Specialized Professional Development for LEA-based Mental Health Staff (Screening and/or Assessment)

Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment (SRA) and crisis intervention is provided to designated student mental health professionals, including but not limited to school counselors, psychologists, and administrators employed by The Learning Choice Academy. Training for these staff is specific to conducting SRAs, intervening during a crisis, de-escalating situations, interventions specific to preventing suicide, making referrals, safety planning, and re-entry.

Specialized Professional Training for targeted LEA-based mental health staff includes the following components:

- Best practices and skill building on how to conduct an effective suicide risk screening/SRA using an evidence-based, LEA-approved tool such as the Columbia—Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) (can be accessed here: <https://cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-c-ssrs/cssrs-for-communities-and-healthcare/#filter=.healthcare.english>); Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) Depression Scale (can be accessed here: <https://www.phqscreeners.com/select-screener>); BSS Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation (can be accessed here: <https://www.pearsonassessments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Personality-%26-Biopsychosocial/Beck-Scale-for-Suicide-Ideation/p/100000157.html>); National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)'s Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit (can be accessed here: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/research/research-conducted-at-nimh/asq-toolkit-materials>); and the Adolescent Suicide Assessment Protocol – 20 (this PDF can be accessed here: <https://preventsuicidewv.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ADOLESCENT-SUICIDE-ASSESSMENT-PROTOCOL.pdf>).
- Best practices on approaching and talking with a student about their thoughts of suicide and how to respond to such thinking, based on district guidelines and protocols.



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- Best practices on how to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide and appropriately respond and provide support based on district guidelines and protocols.
- Best practices on follow up with parents/caregivers.
- Best practices on re-entry.

Virtual Screenings for Suicide Risk

Virtual suicide prevention efforts include checking in with all students, promoting access to school and community-based resources that support mental wellbeing and those that address mental illness and give specific guidance on suicide prevention.

The Learning Choice Academy has established a protocol for assigning school staff to connect with students during distance learning and school closures. In the event of a school closure, The Learning Choice Academy has determined a process and protocols to establish daily or regular contact with all students. Staff understand that any concern about a student's emotional wellbeing and/or safety must be communicated to the appropriate school staff, according to school protocols.

The Learning Choice Academy has determined a process and protocols for LEA-based mental health professionals to establish regular contact with high-risk students, students who are on their caseloads, and those who are identified by staff as demonstrating need. When connecting with students, staff are directed to begin each conversation by identifying the location of the student and the availability of parents or caregivers. This practice allows for the staff member to ensure the safety of the student, particularly if they have expressed suicidal thoughts.

Additionally, LEAs should review, and consider adopting, the National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP's) Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention in a Time of Distance Learning Preparing for Virtual School Suicide Assessment Checklist (which can be accessed here: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/preparing-for-virtual-school-suicide-assessment-checklist>), and Conducting a Virtual Suicide Assessment Checklist (can be accessed here: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/conducting-virtual-suicide-assessment-checklist>) for guidance on virtual suicide practices and assessments to help keep students safe.

Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Participation and Education

In an effort to include parents/guardians/caregivers in all suicide prevention efforts, The Learning Choice Academy has shared this suicide prevention policy and procedures widely and included in the parent/student handbooks.



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This suicide prevention policy is also prominently displayed on the The Learning Choice Academy web page and on all schools within the LEA.

Parents/guardians/caregivers are invited to provide input on the development and implementation of this policy. Parents/guardians/caregivers are provided crisis resources including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Crisis text line, and local crisis hotlines and includes information that hotlines/resources are not just for crisis but also for friends/family and referral.

- All parents/guardians/caregivers have access to suicide prevention training that addresses the following:
 - Suicide warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors
 - How to approach and talk with their children about thoughts of suicide
 - How to respond appropriately to the youth who has suicidal thoughts

Communication with Parents, Caregivers, and Families:

Parents, guardians, caregivers, and families play a vital role in the prevention of youth suicide.

The Learning Choice Academy has included parents/guardians in the development, review, and implementation of this policy.

The Learning Choice Academy provides various training opportunities for parents, families, and caregivers to help them learn how to recognize and identify suicide risk, protective factors, as well as the LEA's referral processes and how they or their children can reach out for help, etc.

All parents are provided with information on suicide prevention resources including crisis hotlines, local warmlines, and also school and community-based supports. If parents, families, and/or caregivers identify or suspect a suicide risk, they are strongly encouraged to communicate with appropriate school staff (counselor, administration, nurse, school-employed mental health professional, etc.) for assistance. The LEA-based mental health professionals are equipped to help identify and support a student at risk of suicide and are trained to ensure the safety of all students. This may include collaborating with other professionals (primary care doctors, marriage and family therapists, etc.) to develop a course of action and/or safety plan. Parents, caregivers, and families are reminded that mental health and academic records are kept separately to ensure confidentiality and to help protect the privacy of education records.

Student Participation and Education

Effective suicide prevention efforts must also include student education and engagement. The Learning Choice Academy and its partners has and will continue to carefully review



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potential student curricula to ensure it includes information on recognizing and responding to signs and symptoms (within themselves and friends), learning coping skills, encourage help-seeking behavior and being knowledgeable of supports and resources.

The Learning Choice Academy provides instruction to middle and high school students on general mental health and suicide prevention. The instruction is provided under the supervision of LEA-employed mental health professionals, with input from county and community mental health agencies, and middle and high school students. The instruction is developmentally appropriate, student-centered, and includes:

- Recognizing behaviors (signs and symptoms) of mental health challenges and emotional distress.
- Recognizing life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others.
- Learning coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma.
- Learning about protective factors.
- Learning 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.
- Guidance regarding the district's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

The Learning Choice Academy maintains a list of current student trainings and is available upon request.

The Learning Choice Academy has shared LEA-based supports and self-reporting procedures, so students are able to seek help if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or if they recognize signs with peers. Although confidentiality and privacy are important, students should understand safety is a priority and if there is a risk of suicide, school staff are required to report. LEA-based mental health professionals are legally and ethically required to report suicide risk. **When reporting suicidal ideation or an attempt, school staff must maintain confidentiality and only share information limited to the risk or attempt.**

The Learning Choice Academy supports the creation and implementation of programs and/or activities on campuses that increase awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Weeks, Peer Counseling Programs,



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Freshman Success Programs, and National Alliance on Mental Illness on Campus High School Clubs [NCHS], and hotline numbers on student identification cards).

Intervention, Screening/Assessment, Referral

Intervention and Referral for Suicide Screening or Risk Assessment

The Learning Choice Academy ensures the school suicide prevention crisis team members receive advanced training in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. The crisis team is responsible for immediately establishing contact with the student and after assessment, shall contact their parents/guardians, if deemed safe. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they are required to promptly notify the appropriate school and school staff, as outlined in the protocol.

Whenever a staff member has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions or potential risk of suicide, they are required to promptly notify the suicide prevention crisis team through a formal referral process for immediate assessment of the student. The Learning Choice Academy has developed and disseminated protocols for screening, assessing, and referring students who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts and/or behavior. The following is included in the protocol:

- Students experiencing suicidal ideation shall not be left unsupervised; students with ideation or suicidal behaviors should be respectfully escorted to the office for an assessment and never sent alone or without staff supervision.
- Collaboration and communication between the teacher/staff and the suicide prevention crisis team is critical during the supervision, referral, and assessment processes.
- A referral process is prominently disseminated to all staff members (classified, certificated, volunteers, interns, etc.) so all know how to respond to a crisis, refer students for further screening/assessment, understand the safety issues of escorting a student, and are knowledgeable about school and community-based resources.
- The referral process includes steps to properly coordinate, consult and make a referral to the local county mental health plan (MHP) on behalf of any student.
- The Learning Choice Academy has established crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications if a suicide death occurs or an attempt is made by a student or adult on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

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- The crisis team is required to notify, if appropriate and in the best interest of the student, the student's parents/guardians/caregivers as soon as possible and shall refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.
- The names, titles, and contact information of suicide prevention crisis team members have been distributed to all staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, and students, included in parent/student handbook, and are prominently available on the school's website.
 - Jeff Fechner, Assistant Director
 - Erika Delgado, Director of Special Education
 - Diane Barrett, School Counselor
 - Angelique Bailey, School Counselor
 - Samantha Peterson, School Counselor
 - Juzenne Cruz, School Psychologist

Imminent Danger

The Learning Choice Academy recognizes that student safety is a priority. If the student is in imminent danger (e.g., has access to a gun, is on a rooftop, or in other unsafe conditions, etc.) staff members are required to request assistance from other staff and call 911. The call shall **NOT** be made in the presence of the student and the student shall not be left unsupervised. Staff shall **NOT** physically restrain or block an exit.

Parents, Guardians, Caregivers, and Families

The Learning Choice Academy has established and widely disseminated a referral process to all parents/guardians/caregivers/families, so they are aware of how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about protocols and school, community-based, and crisis resources.

Community-based organizations that provide evidence-based suicide-specific treatments are highlighted on the LEA's website with treatment referral options marked accordingly.

Resources are prominently displayed on the school website. School and staff autoreplies during vacations or absences should include links to resources and phone/text numbers so parents and students have information readily available.



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Students

The Learning Choice Academy has established and widely disseminated a referral process to all students, so they know how to access support through school, community-based, and crisis services.

Students shall be encouraged to notify a staff member when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they have knowledge or concerns of another student's emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or attempt.

Parental Notification and Involvement

Each school within The Learning Choice Academy has identified a process for ensuring parent/guardian/caregiver/family notification when a student has been screened or screened/assessed for suicide risk regardless of outcome (no present risk to high-risk).

Each school within The Learning Choice Academy has identified a process to ensure continuing care for the student identified to have suicidal ideation. The following steps should be followed to ensure continuity of care:

- After a referral is made for a student, school staff are required to verify with the parent/guardian/caregiver/family that follow-up treatment has been accessed. Parents/guardians/caregivers/families will be required to provide documentation of care to the school.
- If parents/guardians/caregivers/families refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at-risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the suicide point of contact (or other appropriate school staff member) will meet with the parents/guardians/caregivers/families to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues), work to rectify the situation, and build understanding of the importance of care. If follow-up care for the student is still not provided, school staff should consider contacting Child Protective Services (CPS) to report neglect of the youth.

Action Plan for In-School or During School Sponsored 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 them is critical. The following steps should be implemented for a suicide attempt on campus:

- Remain calm, remember the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed.
- Move all other students out of the immediate area.

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- Immediately contact the administrator or suicide prevention liaison.
- Call 911 and give them as much information about any suicide note, medications taken, and access to weapons, if applicable.
- If needed, provide medical first aid until a medical professional is available.
- Parents/guardians/caregivers/families should be contacted as soon as possible.
- Do not send the student away or leave them alone, even if they need to go to the restroom.
- 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.
- Promise privacy and help, and be respectful, but do not promise confidentiality.
- Students should only be released to parents/guardians/caregivers/families or to a person who is qualified and trained to provide help.

Action Plan for Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt by a student is outside of school property, the following steps should be implemented (it is critical for the school to protect the privacy of the student and maintain a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the student):

- Contact the parents/guardians/caregivers/families and offer support.
- 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 parents/guardians/caregivers/families to share information and ensure the facts regarding the crisis is correct.
- Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students.
- Offer to the student and parents/guardians/caregivers/families steps for re-integration to school.

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Re-Entry and Supporting Students after Mental Health Crisis

Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis

It is crucial that careful steps are taken to help provide the mental health support for the student and to monitor their actions for any signs of suicide. The Learning Choice Academy has determined the following steps be implemented after the crisis:

- 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 their feelings.
- Acknowledge the feelings and do not argue with the student.
- Offer hope and let the student know they are safe, and that help is available. Do not promise confidentiality or cause stress.
- Explain calmly and get the student to a skilled mental health professional or designated staff to further support the student.
- Keep close contact with the parents/guardians/caregivers/families and mental health professionals working with the student.

Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt

A student who has verbalized ideation 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.

The Learning Choice Academy has determined the following steps be implemented upon the student's re-entry:

- The school or administrator shall obtain a written release of information signed by parents/guardians/caregivers/families and providers.
- School or LEA-based mental health professionals shall confer with the student and parents/guardians/caregivers/families about any specific requests on how to handle the situation.

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- School or LEA-based mental health professionals shall confer with the student and parents/guardians/caregivers/families to develop a safety plan.
- School or LEA-based mental health professionals shall inform the student's teachers about possible days of absences.
- Teachers and administrators shall allow accommodations for student to make up work (understanding that missed assignments may add stress to student).
- Mental health professionals or trusted staff members shall maintain ongoing contact to monitor student's actions and mood.
- School or LEA-based mental health professionals shall work with parents/guardians/caregivers/families to involve the student in an aftercare plan.
- School or LEA-based mental health professionals shall provide parent's/guardians/caregivers/families local emergency numbers for after school and weekend emergency contacts.

Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

A death by suicide of a student or staff member can have devastating consequences on the school community. Therefore, it is vital that we are prepared ahead of time in the event of such a tragedy. To help The Learning Choice Academy prepare for postvention, the Crisis Team has reviewed the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP's) After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools (which can be accessed at the After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools' web page here: <https://afsp.org/after-a-suicide-a-toolkit-for-schools>) to develop our own suicide postvention response action plan for responding to a suicide death. This plan incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives, including:

- Identification of a staff member to confirm death and cause (usually school site administrator).
- Identification a staff member (administrator or school or LEA-based mental health professional) to contact deceased's family (within 24 hours).
- Conduct an initial meeting of the LEA/school Crisis Team.
- Notification to all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).
- Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:
 - Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death.



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- Emotional support and resources available to staff.
- Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services.
- Share limited information and ensure that is relevant and for which you have permission to disclose. Staff shall not share explicit, graphic, or dramatic content, including the manner of death.
- Remind and direct staff to respond to needs of students regarding the following:
 - Review signs of emotional distress and suicide ideation.
 - Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment.
 - Develop and provide supports to staff in responding to student reactions.
 - Share school, LEA, community-based resources available to students.
- Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students that may be considering imitative behavior.
 - Staff shall immediately refer students who they suspect are considering imitative behavior to a school-based mental health professional.
 - If deemed safe, staff shall contact the students' parents/guardians/caregivers/families.
- Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior.
 - Staff shall immediately refer students who are affected by the suicide to a school-based mental health professional.
 - If deemed safe, staff shall contact the students' parents/guardians/caregivers/families.
- Notification to larger school community about suicide death and the availability of support services.
- Consider as appropriate working with the family regarding funeral arrangements for family and school community.
 - If possible, suggest the funeral occur outside of school hours.
 - Encourage parents/guardians of students to attend funeral/memorial with their children.



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- Request family approval to attend and staff a table for resources to be available at the funeral, if possible, to remind students and the community of available resources.
- Offer a safe space on campus for students to utilize if needed before/after funeral or memorial service.
- Acknowledge there may be a high rate of absenteeism on the day of the funeral and school officials should make appropriate accommodations for staff and students to attend.
- 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 (visit <https://reportingonsuicide.org/> for recommendations on safe messaging). 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 and encourage 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 events) 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 suicidal.

The Learning Choice Academy believes the practices outlined in this policy will assist in reducing the suicidal ideation and attempts of our school community members. As a partner in the community, we always welcome feedback and input on our policies and encourage you to share them as appropriate.