

Houston County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually in April	Descriptor Term: <h2 style="text-align: center;">Student Suicide Prevention</h2>	Descriptor Code: 6.415	Issued Date: 08/08/22
		Rescinds: 6.414	Issued: 08/08/16; 12/12/16

The board is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all students and understands that physical, behavioral, and emotional health are integral components of student achievement. Students are strongly encouraged to report if they, or a friend, are feeling suicidal or in need of help. Students will be provided information regarding the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) and/or 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

PREVENTION¹

All district employees shall attend either the annual in-service training in suicide prevention or participate in other equivalent training approved by the Director of Schools. The training shall include, but not be limited to, identification of risk factors, warning signs, intervention and response procedures, referrals, and postvention.

The Director of Schools shall identify a district suicide prevention coordinator responsible for planning and coordinating the implementation of this policy. Each school principal shall designate a school suicide prevention coordinator to act as a point of contact in each school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation.

INTERVENTION¹

Any employee who has reason to believe that a student is at imminent risk of suicide shall report such belief to the principal or designee. Belief that a student is at imminent risk of suicide shall include, but not be limited to, the student verbalizing the desire to commit suicide, evidence of self-harm, electronic communication suggestive of suicidal ideation, or a student self-refers.

Upon notification, the principal or designee shall ensure the student is placed under adult supervision. Emergency medical services shall be contacted immediately if an in-school suicide attempt occurs. The principal or designee shall contact the Director of Schools or designee as soon as practicable.

Prior to contacting the student’s parent/guardian, the Director of Schools or designee shall determine if there could be further risk of harm resulting from parent/guardian notification. If parent/guardian notification could result in further risk of harm or endanger the health or well-being of the student, then local law enforcement and the Department of Children’s Services shall be contacted.²

If appropriate, the Director of Schools or designee shall contact the student’s parent/guardian and provide the following information:

1. Inform the parent/guardian that there is reason to believe the student is at imminent risk of suicide;
2. Assure the parent/guardian that the student is currently safe or inform the parent/guardian that emergency medical services were contacted;
3. Ask the parent/guardian whether he/she is aware of the student’s mental state;
4. Ask the parent/guardian whether he/she wishes to obtain or has obtained mental health counseling for the student;
5. Provide the names of community mental health counseling resources if appropriate.

The Director of Schools or designee will seek parental permission to communicate with outside mental health care providers regarding a student. If the student is under the age of 18 and the parent/guardian refuses to seek appropriate assistance, the Director of Schools or designee shall contact the Department of Children’s Services.²

The Director of Schools or designee shall document the contact with the parent/guardian by recording:

1. The time and date of the contact;
2. The individual contacted;
3. The parent/guardian’s response; and
4. Anticipated follow-up.

The Director of Schools or designee shall ensure the student is under adult supervision until a parent/guardian or other authorized individual accepts responsibility for the student’s safety.

Prior to a student returning to school, the Director of Schools or designee and/or principal shall meet with the student’s parent/guardian, and student if appropriate. The parent/guardian shall provide documentation from a mental health care provider stating that the student has received care. The principal will identify an employee to periodically check in with the student to ensure the student’s safety and address any problems with re-entry.

POSTVENTION¹

Immediately following a student suicide death, the Crisis Team shall meet and implement the Crisis Management plan. At a minimum, the Crisis Management plan shall address the following:

1. Verification of death;
2. Preparation of postvention response to include support services;
3. Informing faculty and staff of a student death;
4. Informing students that a death has occurred;
5. Providing information on the resources available to students;

The Crisis Team shall work with teachers to identify the students most likely to be impacted by the death in order to provide additional assistance and counseling if needed. Additionally, staff and faculty will immediately review suicide warning signs and reporting requirements. The Director of Schools or designee shall be responsible for all media inquiries.

Legal Reference:

1. TCA 49-6-1901 *et. seq.*
2. T.C.A. 37-1-403

Cross Reference:

- News Releases, News Conferences and Interviews 1.503
Crisis Management 3.203
Student Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Intimidation 6.304
Promoting Student Welfare 6.400
Student Wellness 6.411