



Suicide Sensitivity & Responsibilities

Training for Teachers & Counselors

Psychological & Social Services

August 2015

District Policy & Procedure

- Dallas ISD has had a suicide prevention policy since the mid-1990s, which remains a primary mandate of the Department of Psychological and Social Services
- Dallas ISD's crisis response guide has been praised by the Texas Suicide Prevention Council
- **TRUST** the systems in place and follow protocol for effective crisis management
 - Monitor need for control & safety
 - Avoid personal involvement in crisis efforts
 - Consult with authorities who are mandated to provide help

How Do We Respond?

Recognize

Suicide is a
Public Health
Problem

Signs & Risk
Factors

TEACHERS

Respond

Document Risk
Assessment

Notify Parents,
Principal
& PSS

COUNSELORS

Refer

Refer to Hospital
if Risk is High

Complete YFC or
other Counseling
Agency Referral

COUNSELORS/PSS

What To Look For

- Statements such as “I don’t want to be here anymore,” “you’ll be sorry” or “I want to end it all.”
- Sudden change in mood and affect (e.g., happy to sad or irritable; friendly to withdrawn)
- Disrupted sleep or persistent complaints about not being able to get out of bed in the morning
- Suddenly becoming very cheerful and happy after a bout of depression
- Loss of interest in social activities, sports or hobbies
- Drug and/or alcohol use
- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness; excessive emotionality
- Few friends and/or limited social support or parental supervision
- Cutting /self-mutilation or other self-harming behaviors
- Declining grades and/or academic motivation
- Increasing disciplinary problems
- Involvement in bullying (either as victim or aggressor)
- Feelings of overwhelm and stress without positive coping skills

Response for Suicidal Threat

Teacher hears student threaten suicide or speak of suicidal thoughts

Teacher IMMEDIATELY takes student to counselor

Counselor or PSS follows established Suicide Risk Assessment protocol

If referred to hospital, counselor or PSS confirms admittance next day

Counselor or PSS emails update to principal to inform school staff on a need to know basis

Response for Student Return

A student who has been absent for 3+ days returns to class

Teacher sends student IMMEDIATELY to counselor or nurse to check-in

Counselor or nurse checks in with attendance office or parent to confirm reason for absence

Counselor or nurse provides student with a pass back to class

Counselor or nurse emails update to principal and school staff on a need to know basis

What Can Teachers Do To Help?

SHOW CONCERN

Remain calm and assume control in a soothing manner

Move the student to a quiet and secure place away from other students and staff

Listen empathetically to the student and validate his/her feelings and experiences

Escort the student to a counselor (or nurse if medical attention is needed), enlisting the help of a colleague to cover your class

Upon return, tell the student you are glad he/she is back and ensure he/she has met with a counselor prior to attending class

Monitor mood and affect, and discreetly encourage the student to use his/her coping skills if distressed

Allow the student to visit the counselor or nurse if he/she requests or you feel a check-in is needed

AVOID COUNSEL

Avoid asking the student for information regarding stressors, intent, plan or previous suicidal history

Limit engagement with concerned peers in conversation or answer related questions

Keep away from lessons on suicide prevention without counselor consultation or support

Do not allow the student to stay in class for any length of time after a disclosure of suicidal thinking or attempt

Do not contact the parents to notify them of the student's disclosure or emotional state or respond to parent concerns after the incident—refer to counselor

Upon return, avoid asking the student details about hospitalization or allow him/her to engage others in conversation about hospitalization for attention

Do not provide crisis support in class, electronically or over the telephone

Teacher Support for Returning Students

- Administrators will provide direction to staff on modifications to returning students' grading and workload
- Sensitivity to workload stress and overwhelm is requested, and teacher support is appreciated
 - E.g., extensions, averaging assignments, decreased assignment length, extra 1-on-1 instruction
 - Be sure to receive **PRINCIPAL APPROVAL** prior to making any accommodations
- If you have any questions about assignments and grading for a student with excessive absences, please contact an administrator **and refer this student to a counselor for follow-up**

After School Support

- If a student involved in after school activities *discloses suicidal intentions* and if a school counselor is not available:
 - Contact Dallas ISD dispatch @ 214-932-5627
- If a student involved in after school activities *attempts suicide* and if the school nurse is not available:
 - Call 911 for an ambulance
- Afterwards, inform your principal, counselors, and nurse of the incident and your response for next day follow-up

Communicating With Students

- It is **NOT** advised for teachers to exchange cell phone numbers with students
 - Increases liability & leads to **boundary confusion** for students
- District policy states that:
 - Only certified, licensed or principal-designated employees are authorized to communicate with students through electronic media (including email, **TEXTING** and social networking) — and only “about matters *within the scope of the employee’s professional responsibilities.*”
 - Employees shall **NOT** communicate directly with any student between **9 p.m. & 7 a.m.**

Where Can Students Go For Help?

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.TALK (8255) www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Suicide and Crisis Center of North Texas 214.828.1000 www.sccc.org
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1.800.656.HOPE (4673) www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-hotline
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) www.thehotline.org
- The Trevor Project: National Lifeline for LGBTQ Teens At-Risk for Suicide 1.866.488.7386 <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>



Suicide Response Across All Campuses

- **Counselors**

- Respond to students in crisis through completion of a suicide risk assessment or violence risk questionnaire
- Consult with Psychological & Social Services for referral
- Refer students with medium to high ratings for further psychiatric evaluation and care
- Create student safety plans and review discharge paperwork
- Follow up with student at least once a week for 6 weeks
- Connect family with outpatient services and monitor follow-through

- **Psychological & Social Services**

- (INSERT PSS STAFF NAME & CREDENTIALS) can be reached at (OFFICE VM) or (EMAIL)
- Must be contacted on all HIGH suicide or violence risk cases and ALL suicide attempts
- Will consult on any risk assessment as requested
- Assist with community referrals for families as requested

Reflections on Trauma & Trust

- When a *trauma* is experienced, it takes time to overcome, move forward, and feel safe again.
- There is **NO** right or wrong way to think, feel or respond to trauma so be kind to yourself and others

Emotional/Psychological	Physical
• Shock, denial, disbelief • Increased emotionality • Guilt, shame, self-blame • Confusion, difficulty concentrating • Anxiety and fear • Withdrawing from others • Feeling disconnected or numb	• Insomnia • Being startled easily • Racing heartbeat • Aches and pains • Fatigue • Edginess and agitation • Muscle tension

- Even when you're feeling better, *triggers* (sounds, images, situations) can lead to resurfacing of emotional and physical symptoms

Reflections on Trauma & Trust

- Trust is being able to rely on the integrity, ability, and strength of someone or something
 - *Trauma often disrupts trust*, and this can last a long time without intervention
- You can help yourself heal by:
 - Avoiding obsessive thinking about the disastrous event
 - Seeking comfort and support—talk through your experience and feelings
 - Strengthening your coping skills
 - Challenging your sense of helplessness by getting informed and involved
 - Making stress reduction a priority

Where Can Staff Go For Help?

- The **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is a confidential resource that helps resolve personal problems before they harm your health, relationships with others or job performance.
- 6 **FREE** Individual and/or family counseling sessions are available each academic year
- Your EAP is completely private and available 24 hours /365 days a year
- Call for an appointment: 1.800.479.9639 or visit <https://www.magellanassist.com/default.aspx>

Thank You For All You Do!



“Every child deserves a champion — an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

-Rita Pierson