

STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

The Board of School Trustees of Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District recognizes that suicide is one of the leading causes of death for Indiana youth. This policy is meant to increase child suicide awareness and prevention. The Board believes there must be a partnership between families, the community, and Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District (the “Corporation”).

This policy covers actions that take place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored out-of-school events where school employees are present. This policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, administrators, Corporation staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers.

Prevention

Policy Implementation

The School Counselor shall be designated by the Superintendent as the district Suicide Prevention Coordinator. The district Suicide Prevention Coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy for the Corporation.

The building principal shall designate a School Counselor/school Suicide Prevention Coordinator to act as a point of contact in each school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the school Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

Professional Development

All administrators, teachers, and employees, servicing grades 5-12, will receive two hours of training every three years on risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The training programs used will be research-based that are demonstrated to be an effective or promising program and recommended by the Indiana Suicide Prevention Network Advisory Council.

The training will include additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide, including those living with mental and/or substance use disorders, those who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide, those in out-of-home settings, those experiencing homelessness, American Indian students, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) students, students bereaved by suicide, and those with medical conditions or certain types of disabilities.

Additional training in risk assessment and crisis intervention will be provided to school-employed mental health professionals and school nurses.

Suicide Prevention Programming

Developmentally-appropriate, student-centered education materials will be integrated into the curriculum of all K-12 health classes. The content of these age-appropriate materials will include: 1) the importance of safe and healthy choices and coping strategies, 2) how to recognize risk factors and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide in oneself and others, 3) help-seeking strategies for oneself or others, including how to engage school resources and community-based suicide prevention services. In addition, schools may provide supplemental small group suicide prevention programming for students.

The Corporation will work in cooperation with community-based suicide prevention services to provide educational and referral information about crisis intervention to at-risk students, their parents, and school employees. Referral information and the availability of suicide prevention services in the local community will be made available by the Corporation through its employee training and student education programs to its employees, its students, and their parents.

Assessment and Referral

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal or a student self-refers, the student will be seen by a mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no mental health professional available, a school nurse or administrator will fill this role until a mental health professional can be brought in.

For students at risk:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety.
2. The building principal and Suicide Prevention Coordinator will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible.
3. The principal or designee will contact the student's parent or guardian and will assist the family with an urgent referral. When appropriate, this may include calling emergency services or bringing the student to the local Emergency Department, but in most cases will involve setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider.
4. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate.

Crisis Team

The Superintendent or designee will appoint a crisis team, which will be a multidisciplinary team consisting of primarily administrative, mental health, and safety professionals, and support staff whose primary focus is to address crisis preparedness, intervention/response and recovery. Members of the crisis team should be professionals who have been specifically trained in crisis preparedness through recovery. The crisis team will take the leadership role in developing crisis plans, ensuring school staff can effectively execute various crisis protocols, and may provide mental health services for effective crisis interventions and recovery supports.

Counseling Services

The Corporation provides counseling services for students and families related to suicide prevention. The Corporation employs two school counselors in each building and maintains relationships with community mental health professionals for outside referrals as needed.

The Corporation recognizes the relationship between suicide and drug and alcohol use. The plan, training, and any other program authorized under this policy shall increase awareness of this correlation.

Consistent with Indiana law, the Superintendent or designee shall develop a plan to assist survivors of attempted suicide and to assist students and Corporation employees to cope with a suicide or attempted suicide. The Superintendent or designee may develop any other program or activity appropriate to increase awareness and prevention of child suicide.

I.C. 20-26-5-34.4

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District

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