No. 5440
SECTION: STUDENTS
TITLE: SUICIDE AWARENESS

ADOPTED: 1/19/16
READOPTED: 11/15/16;9/17/1;
5/17/22;4/21/26
REVISED:

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Purpose
The Board adopts this policy in acknowledgment of the school entity's commitment to maintaining a safe school environment; to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students; to promote healthy development; and to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth. The impact of students' mental health on their academic performance and the effect of mental health issues and suicide on students and the entire school community are significant. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and welfare of students, the Board will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources necessary to prevent suicide and promote mental well-being.

Authority
This policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following a student's suicide threat or attempt that does not occur on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel.

Publication of Policy
The Board will notify its school personnel, students and parents/guardians of this policy and will post the policy on the Board's website.

Definitions
At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Crisis Response Team shall include, but may not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse and school resource officers, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (ESAP&SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Community mental agency resources may be called for assistance to be a part of the team.

Expressed Suicidal Thoughts or Intentions shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die, but has not acted on the behavior.

Prevention refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.

Protective Factors shall refer to characteristics (biological, psychological, and social) that reduce risk and the likelihood of the individual developing a mental illness.

Resilience shall refer to an individual's innate ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes.

Risk Factors shall mean the personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide. People affected by one or more of these risk factors have a greater probability of suicidal behavior.

School Connectedness shall mean the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

School Personnel include, but may not be limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, custodians, and cafeteria workers.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicidal Act or **Suicide Attempt** shall mean a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill him/herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

Warning Signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future

Prevention Education for Employees

All school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, custodians, and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding suicide risk factors, warnings signs, response procedures, referrals and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

As part of the District's Professional Development Plan, professional staff in all school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Prevention Education for Students

Students shall receive age-appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education or other appropriate curricula on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self and/or others. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

Student education may be taught by health and physical education teachers, community service providers, classroom teachers or student services staff and may include the following:

1. Information about suicide prevention. Resources are available on the Department's website— www.education.pa.gov
2. Help-seeking approaches amongst students, promoting a climate that encourages peer referral and emphasizes school connectedness.
3. Increasing students' ability to recognize if they or their peers are at risk for suicide.
4. Addressing problems that can lead to suicide, such as depression and other mental health issues, anger, and drug use.

Risk Factors

Risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicidal behavior including, but not limited to:

1. Depression
2. Bipolar Disorder or other mood disorder
3. Substance abuse or dependence
4. Parent-child conflict
5. Previous suicide attempts
6. Self-injury
7. Hopelessness/low self-esteem
8. Loneliness/social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging
9. Poor problem-solving or coping skills
10. Impulsivity/risk-taking/recklessness
11. Adverse/stressful life circumstances
12. Gender identity/sexual orientation
13. Homelessness
14. Interpersonal difficulties or losses
15. Disciplinary or legal problems, including school disciplinary issues
16. Bullying (victim or perpetrator; target, aggressor and/or witness)
17. School or wok issues
18. Physical, sexual or psychological abuse
19. Exposure to family or peer suicide
20. Family characteristics – lots of conflict, few activities
21. Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior
22. Family mental health problems, including alcoholism
23. Divorce/death of parent

Warning Signs

Warning signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the future. These signs may mean that a youth is at risk for suicide, particularly for youth who have attempted suicide in the past. Risk is greater if the warning sign is new and/or has increased and if it seems related to an anticipated or actual painful event, loss, or change. Finally, the presence of more than one of the following warning signs may increase a youth's risk for engaging in suicidal behaviors.

1. Talking about or making plans for suicide;
2. Expressing hopelessness about the future;
3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress;
4. Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:
    a. Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations;
    b. Recent increased agitation or irritability;
    c. Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context; and/or
    d. Changes in sleep (increased or decreased).

Intervention/Prevention

In compliance with state regulations and in support of the school's suicide prevention methods, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents or guardians, the building principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is at risk.

Any school personnel who has identified a student with one or more significant risk factors, or warning signs, or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with the school's referral procedures.

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at-risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

If a student is identified as being at-risk for suicide or attempts suicide and requires special education services or accommodations, the staff person responsible for special education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

Reporting/Referral Procedure

Any school personnel who are made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm that is written, drawn, spoken, or threatened shall immediately notify the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor or nurse. Any threat in any form shall be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. In cases of life-threatening situations, a student's confidentiality will be waived. The school's crisis response procedures shall be implemented.

Each school's SAP (Student Assistance Program) shall also be the Crises Response Team and may include other school staff as resources when responding to a crisis. The SAP is responsible for creating the crisis response plan. The plan should include the following:

1. Procedures for responding to various risk scenarios
2. A suicidal assessment instrument to e used by trained school and or mental health staff (counselors, psychologists, social workers);
3. Guidelines for staff after conducting suicide assessments;
4. Guidelines for collaborating with community mental health agencies;
5. Guidelines for emergency evaluation referrals
6. Guidelines for notification of parents/guardians;
7. Guidelines for documentation'
8. Guidelines for facilitating the student's return to school

The Crisis Response Team (SAP) shall identify individuals designated as coordinators and/or investigators on cases involving peer-to-peer harassment, as required under federal law. These individuals will help identify overlapping risk factors, including hostile environments created by persistent or severe harassment on the basis of gender, race, disability, or other protected classes.

The Crisis Response Team (SAP) in each school shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

If an expressed suicide thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during an afterschool program and the principal or members of the SAP team are not available, call Chester County Mental Health Crisis Intervention Service 24 hours / 7 days **(610) 918-2100 or** 1**-877-918-2100,** 1-800-SUICIDE, or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Thereafter, immediately inform the principal of the incident and actions taken.

Procedures for Parental Involvement

Parent or guardian of a student identified as being at risk of suicide must be immediately notified by the school and must be involved in consequent actions. If any mandated reporter suspects that a student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, that individual must comply with the reporting requirements of the Child Protective Services Law.

If the parent or guardian refuse to cooperate and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school personnel who directly witnessed the expressed suicide thought or intention will pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling Valley Creek Crisis

Center 610-280- 3270 or (toll-free) 1-877-918-2100 and ask for a crisis counselor. The counselor will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If a 302 involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from the principal or other central office administrator.

Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt on Campus

The first school personnel on the scene of a suicide or suicide attempt must follow the school entity's crisis response procedures, and shall immediately notify the principal or designee who will immediately notify the parents or guardians of the affected student(s).

Resources for Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the Department at
www.education.pa.gov

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative - http://payspi.org/

Oct. 2014 Dear Colleague Letter related to peer harassment of students with disabilities:
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html#Section504
Suicide Prevention Resource Center - http://www.sprc.org/ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - http://www.afsp.org/

Reference:

2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action