

BLOOMSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT Policy Manual
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Section: PUPILS
Title: SUICIDE PREVENTION
Date Adopted: 4 December 1989
Date Last Revised: 19 October 2015

228. SUICIDE PREVENTION

.1 Purpose

The school entity 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 school entity will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources necessary to prevent suicide and promote mental well-being.

.2 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.

It is the intent of the school district to provide each staff member with specific procedures to follow when it is determined that a student is considering suicide. The steps outlined should be followed in sequence. The Bloomsburg Assistance Support and Education Team (BASE) shall be referred to as the BASE team throughout the suicide prevention policy. Grades K to 5 will follow Crisis Intervention Team procedures. The Crisis Intervention Team consists of members of Pupil Personnel Services and administration. Grades 6 to 12 will follow BASE team procedures and may be assisted by members of Pupil Personnel Services.

.3 Publication of Policy

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

.4 Definitions

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

Chief School Administrator shall mean the superintendent of the school district.

Crisis Response Team shall include, but may not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, social worker, and school resource officers, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the chief school administrator/school entity. 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, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any 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.

.5 Suicide Awareness and Prevention

The school entity shall establish a crisis response team(s). The crisis response team(s) may include, but is not limited to, administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, social worker, school police officer or school resource officer, and/or teachers and other members of the school's Student Assistance Program team. Community mental agency resources may also be called upon for assistance.

Staff Development

All school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding the school's protocols for suicide awareness and prevention. Education will be provided for all school personnel about the importance of suicide prevention and recognition of suicide risk factors, as well as strategies to enhance protective factors, resilience, and school connectedness. Additionally, all school personnel will be educated about the warnings signs and risk factors for youth depression and suicide.

As part of the school entity'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. Students shall be taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. These lessons may be taught by health and physical education teachers, community service providers, classroom teachers or student services staff. Students who are in need of intervention shall be referred in accordance with the school entity's referral procedures for screening and recommendations.

Student education may include but is not limited to 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.
6. Intervention/Prevention- 22 Pa Code. 12.12

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 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 entity's referral procedures.

The school entity 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 (See BASD Crisis Manual)

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 Director of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

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 or designee. 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 entity's crisis response procedures shall be implemented.

If an expressed suicide thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during an afterschool program and the principal or designee are not available, call TAPLINE at 1-800-222-9016. 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 call 911 for an emergency. The EMA 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.

.6 Crisis Intervention Team (Elementary) procedures:

- .61 Any staff member who becomes aware of a student considering suicide must report that information to a member of the Crisis Intervention Team. A written referral should be filed as quickly as possible with the building administrator.
- .62 As soon as possible, but before the end of the school day, a Crisis Intervention Team member must make individual contact with the student and assess the degree of risk.
- .63 No one person should be made responsible for deciding further action. The contact person should consult with at least one other Crisis Intervention Team member. If there is no Crisis Intervention Team member available, contact should be made with the police and/or therapist from the CMSU Base Service Unit or Family Counseling, as well as the student's parents.
- .64 The members of the Crisis Intervention Team who determine the seriousness of the threat need to specify whether the life-threatening situation is medium/high risk or low risk.
 - .641 Medium/High risk indicators are: a detailed suicide plan; a history of previous attempts; feelings of hopelessness; chronically self-destructive lifestyle combined with severe loss or threat of loss; the

inability to accept help; the lack of any support from a professional or significant other; to have the availability of a method of suicide.

- .642 Low-risk indicators are: vague feelings of hopelessness; no suicidal plans; no explicit written or verbal threats; supportive help available.
- .65 The Crisis Intervention Team will take the following steps:
 - .651 Medium/High-risk situation
 - .6511 Don't leave the student alone.
 - .6512 Contact the parent immediately.
 - .6513 Facilitate appropriate action, including making a referral to an appropriate community counseling agency or hospital.
 - .652 Low-risk situation
 - .6521 Immediate support should be given by a member of the Crisis Intervention Team.
 - .6522 Notify the parent and provide the parent with referral information about appropriate community counseling agencies.
 - .6523 Follow up may include facilitating access to supportive counseling, group discussions, teacher support or other recommendations made by the Crisis Intervention Team.
- .66 In the event that a staff member is unable to reach a member of the Crisis Intervention Team (i.e. after school hours), the staff member should use the following guidelines in order:
 - .661 Do not put yourself in any life-threatening situations.
 - .662 Do not leave student alone.
 - .663 Stay calm and be supportive.
 - .664 Call for help. (For example, local police number 911).
 - .665 Attempt to contact the parent immediately.
 - .666 As soon as possible, a written referral should be made to the Crisis Intervention Team.

- .7 BASE Team (Secondary) procedures:
 - .71 Any staff member who becomes aware of a student considering suicide must report that information immediately to a member of the BASE Team and Pupil Personnel Services. The information should then be reported immediately to an administrator and/or care/crisis worker from the CMSU Base Service Unit. A written referral should be filed as quickly as possible with the BASE team.
 - .72 As soon as possible, but before the end of the student day, a BASE team member must make individual contact with the student and assess the degree of risk.
 - .73 No one person should be made responsible for deciding further action. The contact person should consult with at least one other BASE team member. If there is no BASE team member available, contact should be made with a member of Pupil Personnel Services, administration, and/or care/crisis worker from the CMSU Base Service Unit.
 - .74 The members of the BASE team and/or Pupil Personnel Services or administration who determine the seriousness of the threat need to specify whether the life-threatening situation is medium/high or low-risk.
 - .741 Medium/High-risk indicators are: a detailed suicide plan; history of previous attempts; feelings of hopelessness; chronically self-destructive lifestyle combined with severe loss or threat of loss; inability to accept help; lack of any support from a professional or significant other; to have the availability of a method of suicide.
 - .742 Low-risk indicators are: vague feelings of hopelessness; no suicidal plans; no explicit written or verbal threats; supportive help available.
 - .75 The BASE team will take the following steps:
 - .751 Medium/High-risk situation
 - .7511 Don't leave the student alone.
 - .7512 Contact the parent immediately.
 - .7513 Facilitate appropriate action, including making a referral to an appropriate community counseling agency.
 - .7514 Provide follow-up that may include supportive counseling, group discussions, teacher support.

- .752 Low-risk situation
 - .7521 Immediate support should be given by a member of BASE team.
 - .7522 Notify the parent and provide the parent with referral information about appropriate community counseling agencies.
 - .7523 Provide follow-up that may include supportive counseling, group discussions, teacher support.
- .75 In the event that a staff member is unable to reach a member of the BASE team (i.e. after school hours), the staff member should use the following guidelines in order:
 - .751 Do not put yourself in any life-threatening situations.
 - .752 Do not leave the student alone.
 - .753 Stay calm and be supportive.
 - .754 Call for help. (For example, the local police number 911).
 - .755 Attempt to contact the parent immediately.
 - .756 As soon as possible, a written referral should be made to the BASE team.

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. The school entity 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