

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. The corporation recognizes that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes, and that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people. The corporation desires to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide and values the school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to the factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and helps to foster positive youth development.

This policy covers actions that take place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles, 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

A corporation suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Superintendent. The corporation suicide prevention coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy for the school corporation.

Each school administrator(s) 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. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the school suicide prevention coordinator.

Professional Development

Administrators, teachers, and employees will receive annual training on risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

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, school nurses, and school safety specialists.

Suicide Prevention Programming

Developmentally appropriate, student-centered education materials will be integrated into the curriculum in 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, and
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 school corporation will work 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 school 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 school-employed 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, administrator, or school safety specialist will fill this role until a mental health professional is available.

For students at risk:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure his/her safety.
2. The principal and school suicide prevention coordinator will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible.
3. The mental health professional or principal will contact the student's parent or guardian and will assist the family with an urgent referral to a local mental health facility.
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, director of social and student services, or designee will appoint the crisis team, 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.

Publication and Distribution of Policy

This policy and its regulations will be made available to the public, to all corporation employees, and will be included in student handbooks.

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Adopted: (YYYY-MM-DD)