

Regulation 5350 PUPIL SUICIDE

The following regulations are established for guidance of staff members in recognizing the pupil who contemplates suicide, in responding to threatened or attempted suicide, and in preventing contagion when a pupil commits suicide. Because a prompt response may be essential to a pupil's life, the designation of a district position in these regulations includes the person who holds that position and, if the position holder is absent or unavailable, the person temporarily charged with the responsibilities of the position.

A. Level One

Observation of behaviors or warning signs that indicate a student may be at risk to engage in a suicidal act.

1. School staff member shall notify the Crisis Intervention Team Leader in the building of his/her observations.
2. Crisis Intervention Team Member and/or Leader shall meet with the student to determine extent of the problem.
3. The student's guidance counselor shall be made aware that one of his/her advisees is working with the Crisis Team regarding an at-risk suicide situation.
4. If in the judgment of the Crisis Intervention Team Member there is a serious possibility of bodily harm, the response should be according to level Two procedures.
5. Crisis Intervention Team Member shall inform the building administrator of outcome.
6. If the possibility of bodily harm is not imminent, the student's parent/guardian will be contacted by phone immediately following the assessment. The concerns are to be expressed to the parent/guardian for their information. Contact might include information with regard to the types of mental health professionals or agencies which might be consulted.

While the parents may elect to go no further than to accept the information provided, the family must be notified in every case. If school personnel working with the student feel that Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) intervention is indicated, as in cases of alleged abuse or neglect, contact with DYFS should ensue.

7. The Crisis Intervention Team Member should contact the parent/guardian for the purpose of follow-up after initial contact has been made. The guidance counselor should be apprised of the student's status after the follow-up parental contact has been completed.

8. Documentation of the crisis must be completed on the "Crisis Intervention Team Referral Record Form." The completed form should be forwarded to the Student Assistance Coordinator immediately.

B. Level Two

Student has voiced or written an intent to engage in a suicidal act.

1. School staff member shall notify building principal and Crisis Intervention Team that student has indicated verbally or in writing an intent to engage in a suicidal act.
2. The student is to be kept under continuous adult supervision until the following steps are completed.
3. Crisis Intervention Team Member shall meet with student to determine extent of the problem.
4. The student's guidance counselor shall be made aware that one of his/her counselees is working with the Crisis Intervention Team regarding an at-risk suicide situation.
5. The Crisis Intervention Team Member shall contact the student's parent/guardian and request that the parent/guardian come to school immediately for a conference. At this conference, the Crisis Intervention Team Member shall encourage the family to agree on a treatment plan, which should include immediate emergency psychiatric screening. (i.e., Bridgeton Psychiatric Hospital, 455-9828, or private therapist.) Parent/guardian will notify Crisis Intervention Team Member of results of screening.
6. If it appears that parent/guardian will not follow this recommendation the Division of Youth and Family Services shall be contacted by the Crisis Intervention Team Member to provide for the safety of the student.
7. Once the student has begun treatment, the Crisis Intervention Team Member shall follow up with the parent/guardian to monitor the student's status. The guidance counselor should be apprised of the student's status after the follow-up parental contact has been completed.
8. Upon return to school, a plan of periodic monitoring of the student by the Crisis Intervention Team should include input from the outside treating clinician.
9. Documentation of the crisis must be completed on the "Crisis Intervention Team Referral Record Form." The completed form should be forwarded to the Student Assistance Coordinator immediately.

C. Level Three

Student has attempted a suicidal act.

1. School staff member shall immediately notify the building principal and school nurse who will decide whether or not medical attention is necessary and if the police or E.M.T.'s need to be summoned in order to assist the student.
2. Parent/guardian shall be notified by a Crisis Intervention Team Member of the incident and actions to be taken. Parent/guardian shall be requested to report to treatment facility or school. In addition to medical treatment, emergency psychiatric screening should be done.
3. The student's guidance counselor shall be made aware that one of his/her counselees has attempted a suicidal act.
4. Crisis Team Leader shall notify the Student Assistance Coordinator of the incident and actions taken.
5. Crisis Intervention Team Member shall follow-up on family response to the situation and ascertain that a psychiatric evaluation has been conducted on student and that student and family have followed through on recommended treatment plan.
6. Upon student's return to school, a plan of periodic monitoring by the Crisis Intervention Team Member should include input from the outside treating clinician whenever possible.
7. All communication among district personnel, with parent/guardian and emergency service personnel and actions taken must be documented on the "Crisis Team Intervention Referral Record Form". This completed form should be forwarded to the Student Assistance Coordinator immediately.
8. Returning to school following a suicide attempt.
 - a. Upon the student's return to school following a suicide attempt the Crisis Team will be convened by the Crisis Team Leader. At this time the student will be asked to seek help from a member of the Crisis Team should he/she experience again the hopelessness that ensued prior to his/her suicide attempt.
 - b. The returning student should not be treated any differently than any other student who has been absent due to illness. Suicideologists stress that a student should be returned to his/her normal routine within the school.

News of a death by suicide can have profound affects on the student body and faculty of a school. A carefully devised crisis plan will diffuse extreme emotionalism while remaining sensitive to the real grief that is present. The more expeditiously that follow-up activities are implemented the less likely that "hysteria" will occur.

All activity should be undertaken in as "matter of fact" a manner as possible. Faculty and students need to be assured that the crisis is manageable. A crisis plan also serves to decrease the potential of the so-called contagion effect ("copy-cat" behavior).

A. School Principal to obtain from police immediate verification of death and pertinent facts.

B. Notify school Superintendent.

Put into action planned news media control procedures.

1. Designate spokesperson(s).
2. Prepare written news release. Control/limit access to all other written material.
3. Designate grounds' access perimeters for news media to minimize disruption to school activities. Specify news media office/interview rooms.

C. Notify school's Crisis Intervention Team.

Ask Crisis Intervention Team to attend emergency faculty meeting.

D. If news is received during school day.

Arrange immediate escort home of deceased's siblings and other family members.

E. Arrange emergency faculty meeting as soon as possible.

1. Disclose all relevant facts pertaining to suicide.
2. Allow time for immediate staff reactions.
3. Compile list of all students who were close to the deceased.
4. Compile list of all school staff members who had contact with the deceased.
5. Update or compile list of all students considered at-risk for possible suicidal ideation or attempts.
6. Review planned school response during subsequent school days and weeks. Include policy regarding contracts with news media.
7. Review planned small group (in-class) disclosure to students of relevant facts. A statement will be provided to all faculty that details what should be discussed in small group (classroom).

8. Review procedures for making student referrals from classes to designated crises/survivor support rooms.

F. Contact (pre-arranged) community support personnel.

Coordination of support activities to be supervised by Student Assistance Coordinator.

G. Meet with all students.

In small groups (classroom) only.

1. Disclose all relevant facts pertaining to suicide.

2. Proceed with pre-planned small group discussion process where and when needed.

3. Announce availability of Crisis Intervention Team members. Dismiss students only in accordance with pre-planned protocol.

4. Reorient students to ongoing classroom activities when and where needed.

H. Additional survivor support activities.

1. Reschedule any immediately impending stressful academic exercises/tests if possible.

2. Avoid large group assemblies or similar expressions of grief or remembrance.

a. Avoid public address system announcement. Exception may be a moment of silence in memory of deceased, at end of first day.

b. No flying flag at half-staff.

c. No special memorials.

3. Inform local hot-line and mental health center of events at school so they can be prepared to meet student needs.

4. Contact administrators in surrounding schools and districts. Aftermath of tragedy also affects students and staff in other schools.

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