

SUICIDE PREVENTION

During the past 20 years, the rate of adolescent suicide has almost tripled. Suicide is now the third leading cause of death between the ages of 15 and 24. The Governing Board finds it imperative that this tragic situation be openly addressed and that all staff, students and parents/guardians be made aware of warning signs and procedures by which they may help suicidal students at this especially vulnerable age.

The Board recognizes that all suicide threats must be taken seriously. The Superintendent or designee shall provide all staff members with procedures for intervening in low-risk and in high-risk crisis situations. These procedures shall include guidelines by which staff members may assess the seriousness of a student's risk for suicide.

The Board believes that school staff, students and parents/guardians all can contribute significantly towards the prevention of adolescent suicide. The district shall, therefore, provide suicide prevention training for each of these segments of the school community.

Parent/Guardian Awareness

The Board believes all parents/guardians should be aware of the severity of the youth suicide problem. Before suicide prevention is taught in classrooms, parents/guardians shall be invited to attend a meeting at which the school principal shall present the curriculum goals and the district suicide prevention policy. The meeting shall also be designed to help parents/guardians recognize warning signs of suicide, learn basic steps for helping suicidal youths and identify community resources that can help teenagers in crisis.

Staff Awareness

The Board strongly encourages teachers to help students of all ages develop both a positive self-image and a realistic attitude towards potential accomplishments.

In order that all district staff may learn to recognize the warning signs of suicidal crisis, understand how to help suicidal youths and identify helpful community resources, the Superintendent or designee shall arrange annual inservice suicide prevention training for all certificated and classified staff. The district suicide prevention policy and procedures shall be thoroughly reviewed at this time. All staff shall be expected to learn to identify potentially suicidal students, to assess the degree of risk, to take preventive precautions and to report suicide threats to the appropriate authorities.

Inservice training shall be offered under the direction of a trained district counselor/psychologist or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies able to assist with district staff training.

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

Curriculum

The Board finds it appropriate that suicide prevention instruction be incorporated into the ninth and tenth grade curriculum. This instruction shall help students:

1. Understand how feelings of depression and despair can lead to suicide.
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop new coping skills.
3. Recognize the warning signs of suicidal intentions in their friends.
4. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.
5. Identify community resources where teenagers can get crisis intervention help.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

10200-10245 Youth suicide prevention school program

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When it is reported or you have knowledge that a student is potentially suicidal, inform the principal/designee and complete the following steps that are applicable:

1. DO NOT leave the student alone.
2. Try to contact the parent/guardian to inform them and get permission to call for professional help. If you are unable to contact them or they are unable to come to school immediately continue on the steps 3, 4, or 5, (If the parent/guardian refuses to give permission call the Child Welfare and Attendance Office).
3. If a suicide attempt seems imminent - call the Los Angeles County Psychiatric Evaluation Team (Pet Team) - Telephone (310) 949-8455. If the Pet Team is unavailable - call the Los Angeles County Sheriff - telephone (310) 949-2421 or;
4. If a suicide attempt does not seem imminent, but it is believed the student is seriously considering suicide - call one of the following and they will send a clinician to the school for a free evaluation of the student:

Mobile Response Team
(Charter Hospital - Long Beach)
(213) 634-9102

Youth Response Team
(College Hospital - Cerritos)
1-800-645-5459

5. If a suicide attempt is not imminent or the student is not seriously considering suicide, but it is still believed that the student is potentially suicidal, recommend to the parent/guardian that they call the Suicide Hotline for advice in dealing with their child - telephone (213) 381-5111.
6. Document the steps you have taken and when the family was contacted. Place the documentation in a confidential file in the school office. Place a note in the student's record folder that you have on file confidential information that is available for viewing only by the parent/guardian.

NOTE: You may request assistance from a school psychologist.

**Crisis Intervention
(Post Tragedy/Suicide Procedures)**

This program addresses procedures for dealing with tragedies that might occur at school or in the community that have potential of causing a number of students to be emotionally upset at school. One of the main purposes is to try to avoid potential "copy cat" suicides. The experiences of other Southern California School Districts clearly indicates the need to continue as much as possible with normal school activity to help deal with the immediate impact of a suicide or other tragedy, implement the following procedures:

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

1. The principal will call an emergency staff meeting to relay known information about the tragedy and formulate appropriate procedures for the specific incident. In this way known circumstances can be discussed and disturbing rumors stopped. The school psychologist should be present to help everyone realize that no one can be held responsible in death of another. Staff members should be directed to approach any students who are noticeably upset, ask if they would like to talk to someone about the incident and, if so, send them with a hall pass to the Crisis Room.
2. The psychologist assigned to each school will assist the principal in setting up the Crisis Room. Flexibility as to how long the Crisis Room will be available will be needed and will be dependent upon the reaction to the incident. A professional clinician for tragedy/suicide reaction counseling may be contacted by the psychologist to serve in the Crisis Room for students, parents and/or staff. The psychologist will act as liaison between the clinician and the principal, as well as help contact parents when needed.
3. The experiences of other school districts indicate the importance of having someone in authority walk up and down the hallways during the day immediately following a tragedy/suicide. There are likely to be students reluctant to go to class because they will not want to go into the room they have attended with the victim. The person walking the halls should send the students to the Crisis Room, that person should accompany them or give them a hall pass, as appropriate.
4. The teachers should be encouraged to give students permission to do what feels most appropriate that day, i.e., sitting quietly, or, if they want to talk about the tragedy/suicide, it should be allowed. At the middle and high schools a counselor may be assigned to follow the victim's schedule. The counselor should acknowledge what has happened and relate specific facts about the case. This will give the students a chance to talk about their feelings.
5. Condolences will be expressed by the principal and help will be offered to the family and close friends by the school psychologist. A list of resources will be maintained by each psychologist for this purpose.
6. The principal will be designated as spokesperson to answer the questions emanating from the press and the community. The media must be educated to the fact that it is extremely destructive to "play up" youth-tragedies/suicides in a sensational way.
7. Again, business should be conducted as usual to the greatest extent possible in order to avoid any hysteria and allow a pattern of normality to resume.