

R 5350 PUPIL SUICIDE

- A. Suicidal Ideation (Thoughts about suicide):
1. Any and all indications of possible suicidal behavior by a pupil shall be considered a serious threat, to be dealt with immediately.
 2. In the event of suicidal ideation there is no law of confidentiality restricting school personnel from reporting it along the prescribed channels.
 3. The professional staff member who suspects that a pupil has suicidal tendencies will immediately notify the pupil's counselor or Child Study Team (CST) case manager, if applicable. If not available, the school psychologist, social worker, Vice Principal or Principal shall be notified.
 4. The counselor will meet with the pupil. Collaboration with other team members is always advisable.
 5. If after meeting with the pupil, the counselor and or appropriate personnel deem the situation to be serious, but not a crisis (for example, if the pupil says, "I sometimes think about killing myself.") The pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) shall be contacted by phone to apprise them of the situation and recommend that a mental health professional be consulted. If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) cannot be reached, the Principal or designee will be notified in order to continue to attempt to contact the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The Principal or designee may inform outside authorities such as the local police (856-783-2271) and or the Division of Youth and Family Services (1-877-652-2873) to ensure parent contact is made.
 - a. Have the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) sign a letter indicating that they have been informed and referred to a mental health provider. Such documentation shall be forwarded to the Principal.
 - b. A suicide intervention referral form shall be completed.
 6. Follow up with the pupil and, if necessary, the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to monitor the pupil's status.



B. Suicidal Threat:

1. The counselor will meet with the pupil.
2. If after meeting with the pupil, the counselor deems the situation to be a crisis and believes the pupil to be in imminent danger (for example, if the pupil says, "I'm going to kill myself today."), the counselor shall keep the pupil under continuous adult supervision; and
 - a. Consult with the school psychologist and/or social worker as needed during and after the suicidal threat.
 - b. Contact the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and ask them to come immediately to the school.
 - c. Notify the Principal, and school nurse to apprise them of the situation. The Principal will notify the Superintendent.
 - d. Upon meeting with the parent(s) or legal guardian(s):
 - (1) Refer the pupil to a crisis intervention center such as The Steinger Center at Kennedy Memorial Hospital, Chapel Avenue, Cherry Hill (428-4357), or Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, 1600 Haddon Avenue, Camden (541-2222) or any other crisis intervention center.
 - (2) Have the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) sign a written statement that referral information has been received and he/she agrees to seek immediate assistance from a mental health professional and instruct the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to obtain written medical clearance stating that the pupil may return to school.
 - (3) If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) does not agree to implement these steps or, in the event that contact cannot be made with the parent, the local police and/or The Division of Youth and Family Services shall be contacted (1-877-652-2873).
 - e. A suicide intervention referral form shall be completed.



- f. In the event that medical clearance has not been provided, the Principal, in consultation with the counselor and/or school psychologist/social worker, may consider postponing the pupil's return to school until appropriate contact has been made with the outside treating clinician. This will be done after securing appropriate signed parental release has been secured.
- g. Upon return to school, periodic monitoring of the pupil by the counselor and/or Child Study Team case manager (when appropriate) could include input from the outside treating clinician and parent or guardian. This will only be done after securing appropriate signed parental release of information form.

C. Suicide Attempt:

- 1. Keep the pupil under direct adult supervision at all times.
- 2. The school nurse will be called immediately for first aid service. The police and local rescue squad will be contacted (dial 911) as necessary. If the local rescue squad takes the pupil to the hospital, the pupil will be accompanied by the school nurse or designated staff member.
- 3. The professional staff member who witnesses or becomes aware of a pupil's suicidal attempt will immediately notify the school counselor, psychologist/social worker, Vice Principal or Principal.
- 4. The Principal will make the Superintendent aware of the situation after initial contacts have been made.
- 5. The school Principal or designee will immediately notify the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and will advise them of the situation and what actions are being taken.
- 6. If the situation warrants, an administrator will convene the Crisis Team to explain the situation and determine the course of action, which may include:
 - a. Determining the method to inform staff and pupil body.
 - b. Developing a list of pupils who are close to the victim.
 - c. Organizing counseling services for pupils and staff that may need support.



- d. Issuing a written statement to staff concerning the distribution of information.
 - e. Communicating with the media will be the responsibility of the Superintendent or designee.
7. The Principal shall call an emergency meeting of the school staff to inform them of the occurrence. During the meeting it is very important to make sure that the staff has all the crucial information about the event and that their information is accurate.
 8. The counselor and/or school psychologist/social worker will ascertain that an evaluation had been conducted by the appropriate hospital personnel and that the pupil and family have followed through on a recommended treatment plan. A release of information form should be signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The pupil shall not be readmitted to school without corroboration from the appropriate hospital personnel treating the pupil. Homebound instruction may be used on an interim basis. Planning for supportive educational programming will be accomplished, if needed.
 9. The counselor or Child Study Team case manager will contact the pupil's teachers to ensure a smooth transition for the pupil's return to school.
 10. Upon the pupil's return to school, a plan of monitoring should include input from the outside treating clinician and, if needed, consultation with the counselor, and/or psychologist/social worker.
- D. Suicide Attempt Outside School Environment:
1. Once staff is aware that a suicide attempt has been made:
 - a. The staff member shall notify the pupil's counselor and/or Child Study Team case manager, Principal and school nurse.
 - b. The counselor and/or psychologist/social worker will meet with the pupil upon his/her return to school.
 - c. The counselor and/or psychologist/social worker will contact the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to discuss the attempt and to gather additional information. If the parent cannot be contacted after repeated attempts, the Division of Youth and Family Services shall be contacted by the Child Study Team member and/or counselor (1-877-652-2873).



- d. If the pupil has received treatment, the counselor and/or psychologist/social worker shall request a signed Release of Information form and contact the agency/therapist.
- e. If the pupil has not received treatment, the counselor, in consultation with the psychologist and/or social worker, may provide the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) with a list of appropriate mental health referrals/resources or refer the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to the primary care physician for a list of appropriate providers. The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be requested to sign a form indicating that they have received this information.
- f. If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) does not agree to implement recommendations for treatment, the Division of Youth and Family Services shall be contacted by the Child Study Team member or counselor.
- g. If deemed necessary, the counselor and/or psychologist/social worker will ascertain that an evaluation has been conducted by the appropriate hospital personnel and that the pupil and family have followed through on a recommended treatment plan. A Release of Information form should be signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The pupil shall not be readmitted to school without corroboration from appropriate hospital personnel treating the pupil. Homebound Instruction may be used on an interim basis. Planning for supportive educational programming will be accomplished if needed.
- h. The Principal shall call an emergency meeting of the appropriate or affected school staff to inform them of the occurrence. During the meeting it is very important to make sure that the staff has all the crucial information about the event and that their information is accurate.
- i. If deemed necessary, the counselor and/or the Child Study team case manager will meet with the pupil's teachers to ensure a smooth transition to school and determine a plan of action.
- j. The counselor and/or psychologist/social worker will monitor the pupil's progress.



E. Completed Suicide:

1. If the news of death by suicide is received, the Principal shall verify the information and notify the Superintendent of Schools immediately. All contacts with the news media should be referred to the Superintendent who will be responsible for ensuring that they are handled in an appropriate manner to discourage sensational coverage of the event.
 - a. The Superintendent or designee will obtain from police immediate verification of death and pertinent facts.
 - b. If a suicide occurs outside of the school day, the phone chain will be utilized for notifying staff.
 - c. The Superintendent or designee will direct media to remain outside or to report to the gymnasium and announce times for press releases.
 - d. The Superintendent or designee will prepare written news releases.
 - e. The Superintendent or designee will generate an action plan in conjunction with the Clementon Crisis Plan and school administrators, counselor, psychologist/social worker, and Crisis Team. Appropriate staff will be designated to implement the following procedures:
 - (1) Arrange emergency faculty meeting as soon as possible.
 - (a) Disclose all relevant facts pertaining to suicide.
 - (b) Allow time for immediate staff reactions.
 - (c) Compile a list of all school staff members who had contact with the deceased.
 - (d) Compile a list of all pupils who were close to the deceased.
 - (e) Review planned school response during subsequent school days and weeks. Include information regarding contacts with news media.



- (f) Review planned small group (in class) disclosures to pupils of relevant facts. Include suggested discussion format.
 - (g) Discuss with staff how to appropriately share information with pupils.
 - (h) Review procedures for making pupil referrals from classes to designated crisis/ survivor support rooms.
- (2) Contact (pre-arranged) community support personnel (e.g. other school districts, grief counselors, religious leaders, etc.) Coordination of support activities to be supervised by building administrators. Specific assignments will be given to community support personnel.
- f. Counselors, psychologist, social workers, Crisis Team members, and other support personnel will meet with all affected pupils.
- (1) Disclose all relevant facts pertaining to suicide.
 - (2) Proceed with small-group discussion and see pupils individually as appropriate.
 - (3) Announce locations of support rooms and time availability. Dismiss pupils only in accordance with pre-planned protocol.
 - (4) Re-orient pupils to ongoing classroom activities.
- g. Building Principal or designee will arrange:
- (1) Support of identified staff members.
 - (2) Rescheduling of any immediately impending stressful academic exercise/tests.
 - (3) Avoid large group assemblies or similar expressions of grief or remembrance.
 - (a) Avoid public address system announcements. Exception may be for a moment of silence in memory of deceased, at the end of the day.



- (b) No flying flag at half-staff.
- (c) No special memorials.
- (4) Inform local hot-line and mental health center of events at school so they can be prepared to meet pupil needs.
- (5) Communicate with other pupils' parents through telephone and written notice. Avoid large parent(s) or legal guardian(s) meetings.
 - (a) Review school/community resources they may wish to utilize.
 - (b) Remind them of their children's special needs during this time.
- (6) Contact administrators in surrounding schools and districts as the aftermath of tragedy can affect their pupils and staff.

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