



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response
Code	819
Status	Active
Adopted	September 28, 2015

### **Purpose**

The Joint Operating Committee is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

### **Authority**

In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of the school's (center's) suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the building Director or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)

### **Publication**

The school (center) shall notify school (center) employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the school's (center's) website.[\[1\]](#)

### **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 a school district or joint school district, the chief executive officer of a charter school, regional charter school or cyber charter school, and/or the executive director of an intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school.
- **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

The school (center) shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

## **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION [1]**

### Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education at their home district on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school (center) resources and refer friends for help.

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, but a letter of agreement between the school entity and any community provider(s) is encouraged prior to commencement of any crisis response or post-intervention services.]

The crisis response team(s) should also include individuals designated as coordinators and/or investigators on cases involving peer-to-peer harassment, as required under federal law. These individuals will help identify overlapping risk factors, including hostile environments created by persistent or severe harassment on the basis of gender, race, disability, or other protected classes.<sup>1</sup>

The school entity shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide awareness and prevention, which includes the following:

#### 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.

## **METHODS OF INTERVENTION**<sup>[1]</sup>

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 Director 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.

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 Director 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 (814) 226-7223 for Clarion County Crisis Intervention Services, 1-800-SUICIDE, or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Thereafter, immediately inform the Director 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 pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling County Crisis Intervention Services at 226-7223 and ask for a delegate. The delegate 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 Director or other central office administrator.

### 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 Director or designee. The school entity will immediately notify the parents or guardians of the affected student(s).

### Documentation

The school (center) shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communications with students,

parents/guardians and mental health service providers.

The Administrative Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

### **METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT<sup>[1]</sup>**

The methods of response to a suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by the school (center) include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying and training the school's (center's) crisis response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.
3. Notifying students, employees, appropriate sending district staff and parents/guardians.
4. Working with families.
5. Responding appropriately to the media.
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The Administrative Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school (center) grounds or during a school (center)-sponsored event.

#### Re-Entry Procedures

A student's excusal from attendance after a mental health crisis and the student's return to the school (center) shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.<sup>[2][11][12][13][15][16]</sup>

A school (center)-employed mental health professional, the building principal or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to the school (center) after a mental health crisis, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to the school (center).

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated school (center) employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.

The designated school (center) employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into the school (center) community and address any concerns.

### **REPORT PROCEDURES<sup>[1]</sup>**

Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school (center) staff, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.

When a school (center) employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.

As stated in this policy, school (center) employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.

The suicide prevention coordinator shall provide the Administrative Director with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to guidance counselors, school (center) mental health professionals and school (center) nurses.

### **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES<sup>[1]</sup>**

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention shall be attached to this policy.

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the Department at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative - <https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/task-force-county-init/>

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

Legal

1. 24 P.S. 1526
2. Pol. 103.1
3. Pol. 248
4. Pol. 249
5. Pol. 806
6. 22 PA Code 12.12
7. Pol. 207
8. Pol. 216
9. Pol. 236
10. Pol. 333
11. Pol. 113
12. Pol. 113.2
13. Pol. 113.3
14. Pol. 114
15. Pol. 117
16. Pol. 204
- Pol. 146
- Pol. 805

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