

Suicide Prevention

I. Prevention

Suicide prevention strategies include, but are not limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and each other, and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious inter-relationships among students.

A. Students' Health Education Program

The District's comprehensive health education program will promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills and self-esteem. Developmentally appropriate suicide prevention instruction will be incorporated into the health education curriculum and be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy and anxiety can lead to thought of suicide;
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills;
3. Learn to listen, share feelings and get help when friends show signs of suicidal intent;
4. Identify trusted adults, school resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help; and
5. Recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse and/or suicide prevention services.

B. Student Responsibility

The District will encourage students to notify a teacher, principal, counselor or other trusted adult when they are experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's despair or suicidal intentions.

C. Staff Training

The District's suicide prevention training will help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training shall periodically be offered under the direction of a District counselor, psychologist, or in cooperation with one or more community mental health or public health agencies and may include information about:

1. Identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempts, history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, bullying and harassment, family history of suicide or violence, feeling of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability and other factors;
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in a student's appearance, personality or behavior;
3. School and community resources/services; and

4. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide or displays other indicators.

D. Principal/Designee Prevention Planning

School administrative teams will designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted regarding a suicide threat, including the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, Superintendent, the student's parent/guardian and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.

The principal or counselor will develop a return plan, including a student/staff support plan for use after a suicide attempt.

II. Intervention

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall take immediate interim steps to support the student, promptly notify the principal or school counselor, and request that appropriate school staff conduct an initial risk assessment. The principal or counselor shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible, unless notification of the parents will jeopardize the student's safety.

The principal or school counselor may take the following steps when a student is in imminent danger as appropriate:

1. Secure immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
2. Secure emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
3. Keep the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
4. Document the incident and disposition in writing as soon as feasible;
5. Follow-up with the parent/guardian and student, in a timely manner, to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed;
6. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident; or
7. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used and make recommendations for future actions.

A. Parent Responsibility

If a student is determined to be at risk, the principal or designee shall contact the parent/guardian and:

1. Ask the parent/guardian whether he or she is aware of the student's mental state;
2. Ask the parent/guardian how he/she will obtain mental counseling or appropriate support for the student;
3. Provide names of community counseling resources, if appropriate, and offer to facilitate the referral;
4. Determine the parent's/guardian's intent to seek appropriate services for the student; and
5. Discuss the student's return to school.

B. Post-Event

In the event that a suicide occurs or is attempted, the principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the school safety plan.

School administrators may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to respond to the suicide or attempted suicide with students and staff, provided however, that student confidentiality must be preserved.

Following a suicide, the District will also assess the impact within all schools and the local community and provide appropriate information and support.

III. Communications

The District's suicide prevention policy and procedure and the crisis intervention plan will be available for all staff, students and community through the Student Handbook, school and District offices, and District website.

Student ASB and staff ID cards will list community crisis resources on the reverse side.

All requests for specific information regarding an incident will be directed to the building administrator or designee.

IV. Resources

Community resources for suicide prevention and intervention include:

A. Prevention Resources

1. Washington Youth Suicide Prevention Program, www.yspp.org, 206-297-5922;
2. Washington State Department of Health, www.doh.wa.gov/preventsuicide; 360-236-2800;
3. Prevention Center of Northwest Educational Service District 189, 360-299-4010; and
4. 211 System – This is an information referral service, it assists with providing resources in your community.

B. Crisis Response Resources

1. Emergency Response: 911
2. Local Crisis Hotline: Care Crisis 425-258-4357 or 1-800-584-3578
3. National LifeLine: 1-800-273 and Talk (8255)
4. Mental Health: North Sound Mental Health Agency 1-888-693-7200