



Book	Policy Manual
Section	800 Operations
Title	Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response
Code	819
Status	Active
Adopted	February 27, 2018

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

Guidelines

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

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

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION [\[1\]](#)

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education 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 center resources and refer friends for help.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All center employees, including but not limited to secretaries, coaches, bus drivers and custodians, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

As part of the center's professional development plan, professional educators in 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.[1][10]

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to guidance counselors, school mental health professionals and school nurses.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

The center may provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral/mental health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION[1]

The methods of prevention utilized by the center include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

Suicide Prevention Coordinator

A suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Administrative Director to act as a point of contact for issues relating to suicide. This may be an existing center employee. The center suicide prevention coordinator shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy.

Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the center's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, center employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

Risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

- Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
 - Depression.
 - Substance abuse or dependence.
 - Previous suicide attempts.
 - Self injury.
- Personal Characteristics:
 - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
 - Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
 - Poor problem-solving or coping skills.

- Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.
- Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:
 - Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
 - Disciplinary or legal problems.
 - Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
 - School or work issues.
 - Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
 - Exposure to peer suicide.
- Family Characteristics:
 - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
 - Family mental health problems.
 - Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
 - Parental-Child relationship.

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

Referral Procedures

Any center employee who has identified a student with one (1) or more risk factors or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention.

Documentation

The center shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION[1]

The methods of intervention utilized by the center include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in the center, suicide attempts outside of the center, and completed suicide. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

A center-approved suicide assessment instrument may be used by trained mental health staff such as counselors, psychologists and social workers.

Parents/Guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by the center. If the center suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, center staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.[5]

The center shall identify mental health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance.

Mental health service providers – may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and primary care providers.

The center 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.

Students With Disabilities

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 Joint Operating Committee policy.[2][11][12][13][14]

If a student is identified as being at risk for suicide or attempts suicide and the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education or designee shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Joint Operating Committee policy.[2][11][12][13][14]

Documentation

The 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[1]

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

1. Identifying and training the center's crisis response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.
3. Notifying students, employees 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 center grounds or during a center-sponsored event.

Re-Entry Procedures

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

A center-employed mental health professional, the building principal or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to the 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 center.

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

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

REPORT PROCEDURES[1]

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

When a 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, 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 mental health professionals and school nurses.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES[1]

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

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

[819-Attach.doc \(48 KB\)](#)

Suicide Prevention Resources For Schools

***Please note that the resources listed here are free of charge. There are many more excellent resources for minimal cost.

General Information (many with webinar sessions)

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative

<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/task-force-county-init/>

Mission - The Pennsylvania Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative is a multi-system collaboration to reduce youth suicide.

Vision - Youth suicide prevention will be embraced and incorporated into the fabric of every community in Pennsylvania to address the social and emotional needs of youth at risk and survivors of suicide.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.sprc.org/>

SPRC is the nation's only federally supported resource center devoted to advancing the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*. They provide technical assistance, training, and materials to increase the knowledge and expertise of suicide prevention practitioners and other professionals serving people at risk for suicide. They also promote collaboration among a variety of organizations that play a role in developing the field of suicide prevention.

Toolkit for High Schools

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA12-4669>

Assists high schools and school districts in designing and implementing strategies to prevent suicide and promote behavioral health. Includes tools to implement a multi-faceted suicide prevention program that responds to the needs and cultures of students. Released in June 2012.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<http://www.afsp.org/>

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has been at the forefront of a wide range of suicide prevention initiatives – each designed to reduce loss of life from suicide. They are investing in groundbreaking research, new educational campaigns, innovative demonstration projects and critical policy work. And they are expanding their assistance to people, whose lives have been affected by suicide, reaching out to offer support and offering opportunities to become involved in prevention.

American Association of Suicidology<http://www.suicidology.org/home>

AAS is a membership organization for all those involved in suicide prevention and intervention, or touched by suicide. AAS is a leader in the advancement of scientific and programmatic efforts in suicide prevention through research, education and training, the development of standards and resources, and survivor support services.

Services for Teens At Risk (STAR Center)<http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/>

Services for Teens At Risk (STAR-Center) is a comprehensive research, treatment, and training center. Funded by the State of Pennsylvania's General Assembly in 1986 to address adolescent suicide and depression, the program provides individual assessment and treatment to teens that are experiencing depression and suicidality. They also provide community education services about depression and suicidality to schools, social service agencies, churches and other organizations that request them.

The Trevor Project<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.

Comprehensive School Guide**Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide**<http://theguide.fmhi.usf.edu/>

The Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide is designed to provide accurate, user-friendly information. The Guide is not a program but a tool that provides a framework for schools to assess their existing or proposed suicide prevention efforts (through a series of checklists) and provides resources and information that school administrators can use to enhance or add to their existing program. First, checklists can be completed to help evaluate the adequacy of the schools' suicide prevention programs. Second, information is offered in a series of issue briefs corresponding to a specific checklist. Each brief offers a rationale for the importance of the specific topic together with a brief overview of the key points. The briefs also offer specific strategies that have proven to work in reducing the incidence of suicide, with references that schools may then explore in greater detail. A resource section with helpful links is also included. The Guide provides information to schools to assist them in the development of a framework to work in partnership with community resources and families.

School Policy

Model School Policy on Suicide Prevention –

https://www.afsp.org/content/download/10555/186750/file/Model%20Policy_FINAL.pdf

Written by American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, National Association of School Psychologists, American School Counselor Association, and The Trevor Project. This modular, adaptable document will help educators and school administrators implement comprehensive suicide prevention policies in communities nationwide.

STAR Center Sample School Suicide Policy and Procedure -

<http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/Sample-School-Suicide-Policy-And-Procedure/41/Default.aspx>

Training for School Staff

Society for Prevention of Teen Suicide

<http://www.sptsusa.org/>

The mission of the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide is to reduce the number of youth suicides and attempted suicides by encouraging overall public awareness through the development and promotion of educational training programs for teens, parents and educators.

The free, interactive series Making Educators Partners in Suicide Prevention is designed to be completed at the viewer's own pace. Pennsylvania school staff requiring Act 48 hours may submit the certificate of completion to c-paschool@pa.gov or fax it to [717-783-4790](tel:717-783-4790), along with your Dept. of Education Professional ID number, to have these hours submitted.

More Than Sad Program

<http://www.afsp.org/preventing-suicide/our-education-and-prevention-programs/programs-for-professionals/more-than-sad-suicide-prevention-education-for-teachers-and-other-school-personnel>

The More Than Sad Program of the American Foundation for Suicide prevention provides education about factors that put youth at risk for suicide, in particular depression and other mental disorders. Instructional materials accompany the More Than Sad Program, including a PowerPoint presentation.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (<http://www.afsp.org/>) – PA AFSP chapters will make the “More Than Sad” DVD available **free** to all high and middle schools in PA that request one. **Contact Pat Gainey to receive your copy.** Patricia Gainey, Regional Director, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Greater Philadelphia Regional Office, 3535 Market Street, Suite 4047, Philadelphia, PA 19104; Office: (215)746-7256.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center – Best Practices Registry <http://www.sprc.org/bpr>

The purpose of the Best Practices Registry (BPR) is to identify, review, and disseminate information about best practices that address specific objectives of *the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*. The BPR is a collaborative project of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). It is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Many of the best practice resources listed have to be purchased.

Material for Students

More Than Sad Program <http://www.afsp.org/preventing-suicide/our-education-and-prevention-programs/programs-for-teens-and-young-adults/more-than-sad-teen-depression>

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

The curriculum is not SPRC listed, but does use elements of SOS and Lifelines.

http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_suicideprev main page

Link to Student programs: http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_spstudentprograms

Link to Curriculum: http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_suicideprevcurriculum

Postvention Assistance

Services for Teens At Risk (STAR Center) <http://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/>

Services for Teens At Risk (STAR-Center) is a comprehensive research, treatment, and training center. Funded by the State of Pennsylvania's General Assembly in 1986 to address adolescent suicide and depression, the program provides individual assessment and treatment to teens that are experiencing depression and suicidality. They also provide community education services about depression and suicidality to schools, social service agencies, churches and other organizations that request them. Any PA school can contact the STAR-Center for assistance in the aftermath of a suicide or other tragic loss. STAR-Center can also provide in-service training and resource materials on a variety of mental health related topics.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center Postvention Toolkit

<http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf>

This toolkit is designed to assist schools in the aftermath of a suicide (or other death) in the school community. It is meant to serve as a practical resource for schools facing real-time crises to help them determine what to do, when, and how. The toolkit reflects consensus recommendations developed in consultation with a diverse group of national experts, including school-based personnel, clinicians, researchers, and crisis response professionals. It incorporates relevant existing material and research findings as well as references, templates, and links to additional information and assistance.

Compiled by the: PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative:

<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/task-force-county-init/>