



YOUNG SCHOLARS
CHARTER SCHOOL

Youth Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Response

Purpose

The Young Scholars Charter School Board of Trustees is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its students. This Policy supports federal, state, and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; to establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.

Delegation of Responsibility

The CEO or designee shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this Policy.

Guidelines

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

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education

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 suicide risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Such lessons shall, where appropriate, inform students about broader behavioral health issues such as depression and substance abuse, as well as specific risk factors, protective factors and warning signs for suicide.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

School employees shall receive information regarding suicide risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. As part of the School's professional development plan, professional

educators shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Additional professional development in suicide risk screening and/or assessment and crisis intervention may be provided to specialized staff such as counselors, behavioral health professionals, social workers, and school nurses.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

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

Methods of Prevention

The methods of prevention utilized the School 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.

In support of the School's suicide prevention mission, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the building principal or other appropriate school authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is clearly in jeopardy.

Early Identification

Early identification of individuals with one or more suicidal risk factors or individuals otherwise exhibiting warning signs is crucial to the School's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, School employees, students, and parents/guardians are encouraged to review this Policy to learn about such 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 issues, physical, sexual or psychological abuse, exposure to peer suicide.
- Family circumstances: family history of suicide or suicidal behavior, family behavioral health problems, divorce/death of parent/guardian, parental-child relationship.

Warning signs are evidence-based indicators 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 employee who observes a student exhibiting a warning sign for suicide or has another indication that a student may be contemplating suicide shall refer the student for suicide risk screening and/or assessment and intervention in accordance with School procedures.

In the absence of a warning sign for suicide, students demonstrating suicide risk factors that appear to be adversely impacting the student should be referred to the school counselor or building principal for support and follow-up.

Documentation

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

Methods of Intervention

The methods of intervention utilized by the School include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts, and suicide death. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of a safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

A suicide risk screening or assessment tool may be used by trained behavioral health staff.

Parents/guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by the School and informed of crisis and community resources. If the School suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, Children and Youth Services and/or other appropriate authorities will be notified.

The School shall identify behavioral health service providers to whom students can be referred for further suicide risk screening and/or assessment and assistance.

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

If the student is identified as being at increased risk of suicide, the School shall create a new, or update a previous, safety plan to support the student and the student's family. The safety plan should be developed collaboratively with input from the student and reviewed with the student's family.

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 Board Policy.

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 shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations, and Board Policy.

Documentation

The School shall document observations, recommendations, and actions conducted throughout the course of intervention, suicide risk screening and/or assessment and follow-up, including communications with students, parents/guardians, and behavioral health service providers.

Methods of Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt

The School shall maintain a trained school crisis response/crisis intervention team.

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

1. Identifying, determining the roles, and training School's response/crisis intervention team.
2. Notifying, as appropriate, students, employees, and parents/guardians when there has been a suicide or suicide attempt.
3. Working with families.
4. Responding appropriately to the media.
5. Collaborating with community providers.

Re-Entry Procedures

A student's excusal from school attendance after a behavioral health crisis and the student's return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.

Prior to a student returning to school after a behavioral health crisis, a designated School employee shall meet with the parents/guardians of the student and, if appropriate, meet with the student to ensure the student's readiness to return to school and to create an individual re-entry plan.

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside behavioral health care providers, request written documentation from the treating facility and encourage their involvement in the re-entry meeting.

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

Re-entry of a student with a disability requires coordination with the appropriate team to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board Policy.

Reporting Procedures

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

When a School 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.

Documentation created during the course of a referral and response process shall be collected and compiled into an internal and confidential report.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES

National:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: **TEXT 741-741** or visit <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>

Pennsylvania:

- [List of Crisis Intervention contact information by county](#)
- [List of County CASSP and Children's Behavioral Health Contact Persons](#)
- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources

National and State Organizations

National:

- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): <http://www.suicidology.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): <https://www.afsp.org/>

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): <http://www.sprc.org/>

Pennsylvania:

- Prevent Suicide PA: <http://www.preventsuicidepa.org/>
- Jana Marie Foundation: <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/>
- Aavidum: <http://aavidum.com/cms/>
- Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center)
<https://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/STAR-Center-Home/1/Default.aspx>
- Pennsylvania Department of Education www.education.state.pa.us

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