
PUPIL SUICIDE PREVENTION & RESPONSES

Introduction

The Board recognizes that depression and suicide are on the rise among students at all grade levels. Students under severe stress cannot benefit fully from the educational program and may pose a threat to themselves or others.

1. Purpose

This policy corresponds with and supports other Federal, State and local efforts to provide students with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm. With these goals in mind, the Board directs all school personnel to be alert to any student that exhibits behavioral warning signs of potential suicide or who threatens or attempts suicide. School personnel with such knowledge must then report immediately to the Building Principal or his/her designee, who shall notify the student's parent(s) and the Suicide Intervention Team.

2. Prevention Education

Students will receive age appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices and they will be instructed on help seeking strategies for self and others. Students will be instructed not to make promises of confidentiality when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. Lessons will also contain information on emotional, behavioral and social skills development

3. Staff Training

(i). All staff are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All staff are expected to exercise sound professional judgment and err on the side of caution. Staff shall be alert to any signs that a student may be contemplating suicide. All school personnel shall be informed of their duty to report to the Building Principal or his/her designee any student who has expressed suicidal intent in written, electronic, drawn or spoken form. Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone. Confidentiality cannot be promised to the student.

(ii). Staff will be educated regarding possible warning signs of suicide, the connection between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying and information on reducing the risk of suicide in students who are members of communities identified as having members at high risk of suicide.

**Pupil Suicide Prevention
& Responses (continued)**

File Code: 5146

(iii). In accordance with the provisions of NJSA...as part of the required professional development for teachers outlined in NJAC...every teaching staff member and support staff member must complete instruction in suicide prevention through a program approved by the Board in each professional development period.

4. Response to Potential Suicide

(i). All school personnel who become aware that a student demonstrates warning signs, threatens suicide or attempts suicide must immediately report the incident to the building principal, who will then contact parents.

(ii) The student shall be summoned from class to meet with the principal (or their designee) and the other members of the Suicide Intervention Team (School Counselor, CST Member) and any other professional staff involved with the situation. The student will remain under adult supervision at all times until a determination is made about the seriousness of the possible self-harm.

(iii). A suicide screening, involving the completion of the school suicide questionnaire, will be completed by a member(s) of the Suicide Prevention Team. Risk will be determined by interviewing the student and gathering supportive documentation from teachers or others who witnessed the threat.

(iv). In the event parental abuse or neglect is suspected, the Building Principal or his/her designee and/or the employee who reported/observed the suspicion will immediately contact the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency in accordance with NJAC.....

(v). Following the results of the screening, if there is any *doubt regarding the child's safety*, the parents will be required to immediately pick up their child. The parent is required to read, sign, and comply with the Suicide Ideation/Intent Threat Letter requiring a mental health screening and written clearance to return to school. The parent will be required to bring their child for a mental health screening at a crisis center or a doctor of their choice. The doctor/crisis center will need to provide a written statement that the student is cleared to return to school and does not pose a danger to self or others. A plan outlining follow-up care must accompany the clearance note.

(vi). If the parent(s), guardian(s) refuse to take their child to a psychiatrist/doctor or crisis center for further evaluation/intervention due to their disagreement with the findings, and/or parental abuse or neglect is suspected, the Building Principal or his/her designee or the employee who has reason to suspect abuse or neglect will immediately contact DCPP.

(vii). If the parent is reluctant to bring their child for a screening due to financial concerns (lack of insurance) then the Board of education will pay for the evaluation.

**Pupil Suicide Prevention
& Responses (continued)**

File Code: 5146

(viii). If the school screening *does not suggest any real intent* of self harm, then the parent will be notified and informed of the situation and it will be at their discretion to seek out any services that they believe to be warranted.

(ix). Following the Crisis Center screening and the student's return to school, if the student is not a special education student, the Child Study Team will schedule an evaluation plan meeting to determine whether further evaluations are warranted to rule out a possible disability.

5. Response to Suicide Attempt

(i) If a **suicidal act/attempt occurs on school grounds** during a school-sponsored activity, the first district employee on the scene must **call 911**.

(ii) A staff member must immediately notify the principal.

(iii) Staff must move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision.

(iv) Principal/designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.

(v) Written documentation from any treating facilities will be required prior to the student's return to school. The discharge summary must include a follow-up plan.

(vi) Upon return to school, if the student is not already a special education student, a referral to the Child Study Team will be made to rule out the existence of a disability.

6. Prevention of Suicide Contagion

(i) All building Principals will be promptly informed when a student of this District commits suicide.

(ii) Each building Principal or his/her designee will assemble teaching staff members prior to the opening of school to inform them of the suicide , plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of students.

(iii) The building Principal of the school that the victim attended will assign a crisis team form the student personnel staff to assist the staff in dealing with the general school situation and any individual problems that may arise.

(iv) The suicide will not be given prominence by public announcements or a school-wide assembly. School will not be closed in order to permit students and staff members to attend the victim's funeral.

(v) Teachers will respond to the needs of students with as little interruption of the educational program as possible.

**Pupil Suicide Prevention
& Responses (continued)**

File Code: 5146

(vi) Any misinformation presented by the students will be addressed, taking into consideration the privacy of the victim's family. Students will be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings of loss and their memories of the victim, both good and bad, without penalty.

(vii) All school personnel shall be especially alert to signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.

(viii) Teaching staff members, under the direction of the building Principal or his/her designee shall attempt to prevent social contagion by:

- a) Preventing glorification or romanticizing the suicide.
- b) Helping students recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems.
- c) Encourage students to ask probing questions when a fellow student suggests suicide and to report such suggestions immediately to a teaching staff member or School Counselor.
- d) Discuss ways of handling depression and anxiety without resorting to suicide.

(ix) Students who were close to the victim and their parents shall be offered information about available community mental health resources and services.

Date: June 19, 2017

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 9:61 et seq. Abuse, abandonment, cruelty and neglect of child;

See particularly:

N.J.S.A. 9:63.1; 8.9 through 8.14; 8.21; -8.27through -8.30; 8.34 through -8.36; 8.40;8.46; 8.56

N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111 et seq. Instruction in Suicide Prevention

See particularly:

N.J.S.A. 18A:6-113

N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3 et seq.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1 et seq. General Provisions for School Health Services

See particularly:

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11.1