

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention**

The Board of Education recognizes that suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people, and it provides suicide prevention programs to prevent the problem of youth suicide. Educational programs are provided to increase student and school staff awareness of the risk factors and the warning signs that contribute to suicidal behavior. Suicide intervention procedures are designed to identify and refer students vulnerable to becoming at risk of or students who may already be at risk for suicide. School-wide interventions will address the completed suicide or suicidal attempt that affects more than an individual student.

All suicide prevention, intervention and follow-up programs will be reviewed, evaluated and revised on a regular basis or as needed.

### **Interventions**

All school employees acting as agents of the Board of Education share in the commitment to protect the safety and well-being of its students. School employees must not maintain confidentiality when a student is considered "at risk" for suicide. Whenever a staff member is concerned or has any suspicion that a student is "at risk" for suicide, he or she must notify the building Administrator or the designated administrator of his or her concern. An initial assessment to determine the level of risk will be done. Upon completion of the assessment, a plan of action will be developed that:

Must include notification of parent/guardian;

May include convening the Student Assistance Team (SAT), monitoring of the student by appropriate personnel and/or a referral to a mental health professional.

School professionals will consult and collaborate with community service providers with the consent of parents or guardians but will not assume the primary responsibility for treatment.

The Student Assistance Team will develop, evaluate and revise procedures to be used in the event of a suicide attempt or completed suicide that affects more than the individual student.

### **Prevention**

The Board of Education supports a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention based upon the developmental needs of children. This approach will promote an increased awareness of the problem of youth suicide for students, school staff, parents, community agencies, and any other adults involved with children and youth.

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention** (continued)

#### **Evaluation**

Regular planned evaluation of the suicide program will promote the continuation of responsible and responsive programs that enhance the prevention of youth suicide.

#### **Suicide Prevention**

Hamden Youth Suicide Prevention Programs require a three-step educational approach:

1. Professional Development
2. Educational Programs for Students
3. Parent and Community Awareness/Education

The major goals of this Program are: (1) the promotion of health and well being for all children and youth, and (2) early recognition of those students who are vulnerable to "becoming at risk", or who may already be "at risk", for suicide.

#### **1. Education - Staff Development**

A program to educate and prepare school staff in suicide prevention and early recognition must be the first educational step that is planned and implemented. Characteristics of a staff development program for school personnel include:

- A. Utilization of and collaboration with professionals with clinical expertise in child and adolescent mental health in both the school and community at large.
- B. Involvement of all school staff in appropriate aspects of the program.
- C. Preparation of teachers and support service personnel for collaboration in classroom education programs and student SAT assistance or other support programs for students.
- D. Promotion of staff involvement in efforts to create and maintain a healthy school environment.
- E. Inclusion of factual information about the factors that may increase a student's risk for suicide.
- F. Preparation of staff to recognize the presence of risk factors and the signs and symptoms of stress, coping difficulties, depression, self-destructive behaviors and the potential for suicide in individual students.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention (continued)

#### 1. Education - Staff Development (continued)

- G. Clear delineation of the procedural guidelines for every staff member to follow whenever a concern is identified, a student is identified as vulnerable to developing risk factors, a student is suspected to be "at risk" or a crisis has occurred.
- H. Information on school and community resources.
- I. Clear delineation of the roles and functions of specific school personnel.
- J. Provisions for continuing in-service education, incorporation into the district's professional development plan and orientation of new staff.

#### 2. Educational - Programs for Students

Characteristics of classroom and related educational programs for students include:

- A. Involvement of all students in the effort to establish and maintain a healthy, supportive school environment and in programs that provide opportunities for each of them to feel successful.
- B. Emphasis on primary prevention and the maintenance of physical and mental health.
- C. Developmentally appropriate goals, objectives and learning activities.
- D. Elementary programs designed to foster the development of self-esteem, effective problem solving and coping skills, and trusting relationships with adults.
- E. Secondary programs designed to foster continued development of self-esteem and skill building in stress management and problem-solving techniques and to identify and promote utilization of school and community resources for support and intervention.
- F. Learning experiences which enable youth to recognize self-destructive or suicidal behaviors of peers and to seek help for those who may be vulnerable or "at risk".
- G. Recognition of the strengths and appropriate roles of students in identifying and referring their peers who may be "at risk".

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention (continued)

#### 2. Educational - Programs for Students (continued)

- H. Extreme care not to glamorize suicide and other self-destructive behavior or to categorize them as alternative solutions to problems.
- I. Integration into comprehensive health and other pertinent curricula.
- J. Provisions for periodic review of the curriculum and student participation in the review process.

#### 3. Education - Parent and Community Awareness/Education

Involvement of parents and other interested members of the community in the youth suicide prevention program, including dissemination of the district's policy and procedures, essential.

- A. Information on the school district's suicide prevention program, policies, procedures and curriculum.
- B. Role of the parent with emphasis on prevention.
- C. Skills for enhancing self-esteem and positive coping and communication skills in children and youth.
- D. Information on risk factors and warning signs of suicidal behavior.
- E. Information on school and community resources.
- F. Opportunity for participants to meet both school and community health and mental health professionals individually or in small groups to discuss specific issues or questions.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221(e) Boards of education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures.

Policy adopted: July 12, 2004

HAMDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Hamden, Connecticut

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures**

#### **Situation I - Students Potentially at Risk for Suicide**

##### **Action By Staff**

Staff who have identified a "potentially at risk" student are expected to bring this student's name to the attention of the school principal as soon as possible. All communication concerning the student shall be treated confidentially.

##### **Action By Administration**

The principal or designee together with the social worker, school psychologist, guidance counselor or school nurse may choose to employ one, or some combination of the following options:

- Monitor the student
- Contact the student
- Contact the student's teachers for additional information
- Contact the student's parents/guardian
- Refer the student to in-school resources
- Other options as warranted by the circumstances

##### **Follow-Up By Staff**

Staff will be asked to monitor a student who has been identified as "potentially at risk" and should notify the principal or designee if the student exhibits a more intensified pattern of distress or a decline in academic or social functioning.

##### **Follow-Up By Administration**

In the event that there is a suicide attempt or completion in the community, the principal will alert staff and ask that they monitor the student more closely. If circumstances warrant he/she will convene the school's crisis team (refer to Guidelines for Situation III and IV), or initiate any of the action options listed above.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide

##### Action By Staff

Staff who have identified an "at risk" student must immediately refer the student to the principal.

- This must be done even if the student has confided in staff and asked that their discussion be kept strictly private. Staff must explain to the student that complete confidentiality cannot be kept in circumstances that are potentially life threatening. However, reassurance should be given that all communication will be on a need-to-know basis, limited to those persons who have direct responsibility for the safety and well-being of the student.

##### Action By Administration

Upon receiving a referral from staff, the principal or designee will meet with the social worker, school psychologist, guidance counselor or school nurse to assess the seriousness of the situation.

Unless there appears to be imminent risk of self harm, they will gather additional information from the person who made the referral and/or other staff before they interview the student to determine the level of suicidal risk.

- The collection of information and interview of the student should be done on the same day the referral is made.

If there is imminent risk, the student should be interviewed immediately. Based on the information gathered and/or the results of the student interview, the principal or designee will take the following actions according to the risk level of the situation.

**High Risk for Suicide:** The student has the intent to kill him/herself, a specific plan for carrying it out and immediate access to the method; in addition, he/she exhibits feelings of isolation, hopelessness and helplessness.

1. The principal or designee will explain to the student that he/she is required to contact, and therefore will be contacting his/her parents/guardian out of deep concern for the student. The principal or designee also will not leave the student alone but will stay with the student to offer support.
2. The principal or designee will arrange to have the Student Assistance Team (SAT) convened to develop a plan of action and to delegate responsibilities.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide (continued)

##### High Risk for Suicide (continued)

3. The principal or designee will contact the student's parents/guardian to inform them of the situation and to request that they come to school immediately.
  - A. If the parents/guardian refuse to come to school or if they come but refuse to cooperate and/or if their response could be harmful to the child, the principal or designee should explain that the school may be required to file a medical neglect report with the Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS) and, if necessary, that report will be filed.

Finally, the school will follow medical emergency procedures if they are warranted.
  - B. If the parents/guardian cannot be contacted and the SAT determines that a medical emergency exists, follow procedures for such an emergency.
4. When parents/guardian arrive at school, the principal or designee and the person who interviewed the student will meet with the parents/ guardian. The following points will be covered:
  - A. Obtain information regarding student's mental health history. If the student is currently being seen by a mental health professional, ask parents/guardians to sign a release for permission to contact that professional.
  - B. The need for an immediate suicide risk evaluation at a medical or mental health facility. If possible, this appointment should be scheduled during the meeting.
  - C. The need for continued monitoring of the student at home if he/she is released following the evaluation.
  - D. The need to remove any means by which the student could harm him/herself, especially the method described in the student's plan.
  - E. The need to obtain follow-up mental health counseling in order to coordinate in-school support with out-of-school care.
  - F. A request for parents/guardian to sign a release of information form for communication between the school and the facility to which the student will be taken.
  - G. Information about resources the parents/guardian can contact in case of emergency.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide (continued)

#### High Risk for Suicide (continued)

#### 5. Follow-Up

- A. The following day an SAT member will contact the family to discuss its plan to provide professional help and support to the student. The SAT will meet to develop a plan of action for in-school support of the student.
- B. If the student is in school the following day, the member of the SAT who interviewed him/her the previous day will meet with him/her to offer continuing support.
- C. The SAT will continue to monitor the student and will meet periodically to review the case. Follow-up monitoring should include contact with the student, student's therapist, parents where it is appropriate and with staff and student's friends where it is appropriate.

**Moderate Risk For Suicide:** The student has some intent to kill him/herself and has thought about how to do it. He/she has access to the method but has no specific plan. Although the student may exhibit feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, he/she shows some willingness to accept help.

1. The principal or designee will explain to the student that he/she is required to contact, and therefore will be contacting his her parents/guardian out of deep concern for the student.
2. Following the meeting with the student, the principal or designee will convene the Student Assistance Team (SAT) to plan a course of action and to delegate responsibilities.
3. The principal or designee will contact the student's parents/guardian to inform them of the situation and to request that they come to school by the end of the school day.
  - A. If the parents/guardian refuse to come to school or if they come but refuse to cooperate and/or if their response could be harmful to the child, the principal or designee should explain that the school may be required to file a medical neglect report with the Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS) and, if necessary, that report will be filed.
  - B. If the parents/guardian cannot be contacted and the SAT determines that a medical emergency exists, follow procedures for such an emergency.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide (continued)

##### Moderate Risk For Suicide (continued)

4. When parents/guardian arrive at school, the principal or designee and the person who interviewed the student will meet with the parents/ guardian. The following points will be covered:
  - A. Obtain information regarding student's mental health history. If the student is currently being seen by a mental health professional, ask parents/guardians to sign a release for permission to contact that professional.
  - B. The need for a suicide risk evaluation at a medical or mental health facility as soon as possible. If possible, this appointment should be scheduled during the meeting.
  - C. The need for continued monitoring of the student at home.
  - D. The need to remove any means by which the student could harm him/herself, especially the method described in the student's plan.
  - E. The need to obtain follow-up mental health counseling in order to coordinate in-school support with out-of-school care.
  - F. A request for parents/guardian to sign a release of information form for communication between the school and the facility to which the student will be taken.
  - G. Information about resources the parents/guardian can contact in case of emergency.

##### 5. Follow-Up

- A. The following day an SAT member will contact the family to discuss its plan to provide professional help and support to the student. The SAT will meet to develop a plan of action for in-school support of the student.
- B. If the student is in school the following day, members of the SAT who interviewed him/her the previous day will meet with him/her to offer continuing support.
- C. The SAT will continue to monitor the student and will meet periodically to review the case. Follow-up monitoring will include contact with the student, student's therapist, parents, where it is appropriate, and with staff and student's friends, where it is appropriate.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide (continued)

**Low Risk For Suicide:** The student has some intent to kill him/herself but has only a vague plan or no plan at all with very low access to a possible method. Although he/she expresses feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, he/she is able to describe how things could change in order to be better.

Procedures to be followed are the same as for Moderate Risk for Suicide.

**Very Low Risk For Suicide:** The student has no serious intent to kill himself/herself and has no plan or methods. He/she is experiencing feelings of intense emotional distress but is willing to work, with help, to change things.

1. The principal or designee will talk with the student stressing the availability of helping resources within the school.
2. The principal or designee will explain to the student that he/she is required to contact, and therefore will be contacting his/her parents/guardian out of concern for the student and to inform them of the situation.
3. The principal or designee will convene the SAT to develop a plan of action and to delegate responsibilities.
4. The principal or designee will contact the student's parents/guardian to inform them of the situation and to discuss sources of professional help within the school and in the community.
  - A. Every effort should be made to contact the parents/guardian on the day that the referral is made or as soon as possible thereafter if they are not immediately available.
  - B. If appropriate, the parents/guardian will be asked to sign a release of information form for communication between the school and the community helping source.
5. **Follow-Up**
  - A. The SAT will continue to monitor the student and will meet periodically to review the case.
  - B. Follow-up monitoring will include contact with the student and, where appropriate, with the student's parents/ guardians and therapist.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation II - Students at Risk for Suicide (continued)

##### Action By Staff After School Hours

Staff who become aware of an "at risk" student during after school hours should try to assess the level of suicidal risk by talking to the student.

- If it is not possible to assess the level of risk, he/she should contact the principal who will make a judgment about contacting a crisis center and following existing guidelines.
1. If there appears to be **imminent risk of suicide**, he local police should be contacted and given information about the situation and the student's whereabouts.
    - If the circumstances are very serious, staff should stay in contact with the student until someone can be enlisted to summon help. Contact should be made as soon as possible with the principal who will act in accordance with existing guidelines.
  2. If there appears to be **no imminent risk of suicide**, staff should contact the principal who will consult with SAT members or a crisis center and will act in accordance with existing guidelines.

##### Action By Administrator After School Hours

When staff notifies the principal about an "at risk" student after school hours, the principal will:

1. Obtain whatever information staff is able to provide, including the student's name and location.
2. Contact the student's parents/guardian and encourage them to contact a crisis center to determine the best course of action, and will cooperate with the center in taking such action.
  - All guidelines for in-school referral will be followed as appropriate.

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures** (continued)

#### **Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide**

##### **Action By Staff**

The staff member who receives information concerning an attempted suicide will immediately contact the school principal, or designee, who will try to verify the information.

##### **Action By Administration**

The principal will call a meeting of the SAT as soon as possible in order to develop a plan of action and to delegate responsibilities.

Actions should include contacting the student's family for the purpose of:

- Verifying information.
- Offering support and possibly facilitating referrals.
- Sharing information about the importance of careful monitoring of their child and the need to remove any means by which the student could harm him/herself, especially by the method described in the student's plan.
- Obtain permission to contact non-school personnel involved.
- Plans for possible school interventions should include:
  - Notification of staff.
  - Contacting friends of student who has attempted suicide, as well as other students involved in or aware of the attempt.
  - Contacting principal of sibling's school(s).

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures** (continued)

#### **Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide** (continued)

##### **Follow-Up By Staff**

To implement plan developed by SAT, including monitoring of "potentially at risk" students.

To meet with parent(s) to plan student's transition back to school. A release form should be signed, if not already done, giving permission to communicate with community resources and/or therapist.

To assign a SAT member to meet with the returning student and provide ongoing support upon his/her return to school.

##### **Follow-Up By Administration**

To coordinate and monitor implementation of SAT plan.

If the family does not follow through on referral for counseling the school, under the principal's direction, should make every attempt to encourage parents to follow through on a referral for counseling. If the family refuses to obtain such help following a suicide attempt by their child, the principal, or designee, will explain that the school will be required to file a medical neglect report with DCYS and will file such a report. In addition, the school will consult with the facility which treated the student to determine the best course of action in the interim.

#### **Situation IV: Suicide or Sudden Death of a Student**

##### **Action By Staff**

The Staff person receiving this information will immediately notify the school principal or designee, who will verify the information.

##### **Action By Administration**

1. Upon verification, the principal or designee will notify the Deputy Superintendent and other appropriate administrators (principals of sibling's schools, special services personnel, etc.).

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide (continued)

##### Action By Administration (continued)

2. The principal or designee shall convene an emergency meeting of the Student Assistance Team (SAT). SAT shall meet immediately to develop a plan and delegate responsibilities, including:
  - A. Contacting the student's family;
  - B. Preparing a written statement of the facts;
  - C. Planning who will be available for small group support;
  - D. Supporting teachers who are uncomfortable telling students;
  - E. Dealing with the media;
  - F. Deciding which outside consultants should be involved, if any;
  - G. Deciding who should be notified (parents of friends, colleagues, PTA, etc.);
  - H. Collecting the student's personal belongings;
  - I. Monitoring and supporting other "potentially at risk" and "at risk" students;
  - J. Planning staff meetings; and
  - K. Doing other tasks identified by members.
3. Since most staff will be unavailable, they should be notified in writing of the basic facts (who, what, when) and advised to follow procedures designated by SAT.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide (continued)

##### Follow-Up By Staff

1. Students who were close to the student who died should be informed individually by a team member or other support staff. The following guidelines should be observed:
  - A. If the student has been identified as "at risk" or if the student indicates that he/she may have suicidal feelings, a preliminary assessment of suicidal risk should be done.
  - B. The availability of support should be stressed; a plan should be developed with the student to identify to whom he/she can go for support in and out of school.
  - C. After an appropriate period of time with support personnel, the student should be given the option of returning to class or making arrangements to go home.
  - D. Students should be allowed to leave school only if accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult.
  - E. The students' parents should be informed of the situation.
2. The classroom teacher, a SAT member, or another support staff member shall inform students of the basic facts of the death and stress the availability of immediate and on-going support. Students should be allowed to discuss as long as appropriate, to leave class for short-term support, or to call their parents.

##### Follow-Up By Administration

1. If a general staff meeting is held prior to informing students of the death, the meeting should review "Guidelines for Talking with Students About Suicide/Sudden Death". Staff should be asked to be aware of those students who are "potentially at risk" or "at risk" or other students who may not voluntarily seek help and should be referred.
2. If the general staff meeting is held after students are informed, the meeting should review the day's events and identify students as above.
3. In either case, great sensitivity should be taken in responding to staff member needs. Staff will experience all the feelings associated with the death, and the availability of support for them should be stressed. They should especially be encouraged to meet with a support staff person if they are experiencing guilt related to unobserved warning signs from the student or related to actions they may have taken with the student (discipline, grades, etc.). .

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures** (continued)

#### **Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide** (continued)

##### **Follow-Up By Administration** (continued)

4. End of the day SAT meeting:
  - A. Review the day's events;
  - B. Modify previous plans as needed; and,
  - C. Develop support plan for students who are in risk categories.

##### **Action By Administration - After School Hours Death**

1. Upon verification, the principal or designee shall notify the Deputy Superintendent and other appropriate administrators (principals of sibling's schools, special services personnel, etc.).
2. The principal or designee will contact other SAT members and staff as appropriate.
3. All guidelines for in-school hours referral will be followed as appropriate. See Action by Administrators.

##### **Follow-Up By Staff - After School Hours Death**

1. The team members will inform parents of those students who were closest to the student who has died, ask them to share this information with their own child and stress that the SAT members will meet with the students in school.
2. If those close friends are not notified the evening before, team members should notify them when they arrive at school, stressing the availability of support.
3. All other students should be notified as soon as appropriate. See Follow-up by Staff.

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures** (continued)

#### **Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide** (continued)

##### **Day Following Suicide**

###### **Action By Staff**

Staff should try to resume a normal class routine while encouraging distressed students to utilize the support services that are available.

1. Return to normal as much as possible, but continue to provide highly visible support. This support may comprise:
  - A. Small group discussions in visible places (library, cafeteria, etc.).
  - B. Availability of counselors in private rooms for one-to-one support; and
  - C. Use of gym to work off feelings.
2. An administrator and SAT members should determine who shall contact and/or visit the family to:
  - A. Offer condolences and support;
  - B. Arrange for return of personal possessions;
  - C. Gather information regarding funeral arrangements and family wishes regarding student/staff attendance at funeral; and,
  - D. Offer other assistance as needed and appropriate.
3. Meetings of SAT shall take place as needed during the day and after school to review the day and continue planning.

##### **Second and Subsequent Days Following Death**

###### **Action By Staff**

Continue to monitor "potentially at risk" and "at risk" students and to refer students to designated support centers as needed.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention Procedures (continued)

#### Situation III: Students Who Have Attempted Suicide (continued)

#### Second and Subsequent Days Following Death (continued)

##### Action By Administration

1. Announce funeral arrangements.
2. Continue to monitor and support students, especially on the one-week, one-month, and one-year anniversaries of the death.
3. Maintain frequent contact with staff to facilitate identification of students who may need extra support; weekly staff meetings may be necessary for the first month.
4. Take care of business related to student, e.g.:
  - A. Delete name from class lists, mailing lists, schedules, etc.
  - B. Notify colleges to which student had applied.
  - C. Other

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221(e) Boards of Education to prescribe rules

Regulation approved: July 12, 2004

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