

## **Suicide Prevention and Postvention**



### **1. Purpose**

The Kansas State School for the Blind, in recognition of the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students, to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, hereby adopts this policy. This policy corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

### **2. Prevention Education**

Students will receive age appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self or others. Students are taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. Lessons will contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Lessons are taught by [health and physical education teachers, community service providers and student services staff]. Students who are in need of intervention will be referred to our Social Work Team for screening and recommendations.

### **3. Staff Training and Responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All staff are expected to exercise sound professional judgment, err on the side of caution and demonstrate extreme sensitivity throughout any crisis situation. All school personnel should be informed of the signs of youth depression/suicide.

Any staff member who is originally made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm, that is written, drawn, spoken or threatened, will immediately notify the Superintendent or their designee. Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. Thus, in cases of life threatening situations a student's confidentiality will be waived. The district's suicide crisis response procedures will be implemented.

#### 4. Suicide Crisis Response Procedures

##### Suicide Threat

**Definition** – A suicide threat is a verbal or non-verbal communication that the individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior.

- a. The staff member who learns of the threat will locate the individual and arrange for or provide constant adult supervision.
- b. The above-mentioned staff member will immediately inform the Superintendent/designee.
- c. The Superintendent/designee will involve student services/counseling staff, school nurse or other trained mental health professional in their absence.
- d. The appropriate staff or approved agency provider will determine risk and intervention needed by interviewing the student, and gathering appropriate supportive documentation from teachers or others who witnessed the threat.
- e. The Superintendent/designee will:
  - Contact the parent/guardian, apprise them of the situation and make recommendations. Most often it is the person conducting the interview who contacts the parent/guardian.
  - Put all recommendations in writing to the parent/guardian. [email delivery confirmation, a parent/signature “sign off” of recommendations sent home to be returned the next day or other approved communication procedure.]
  - Mail the recommendation through certified mail if there is any question or doubt of the parent/guardian receiving the recommendations.
  - Maintain a file copy of the letter in a secure and appropriate location.
- f. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the Superintendent/designee will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.
- g. If the parent refuses to cooperate, and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school employee who directly witnessed the threat will pursue an involuntary mental health assessment by calling the Wyandotte County, KS Mental Health Crisis Line 3913-788-4200. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If an involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand

witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from appropriate district Social Work staff .

**Note:** If a threat is made during an after-school program, and no school or district personnel are available, call Wyandotte County, KS Mental Health Crisis Line 913-788-4200 *or* 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Inform the Superintendent of the incident and actions taken.

### **Suicidal Act or Attempt on School Grounds or During a School- Sponsored Activity**

**Definition**<sup>1</sup> - Suicidal act (also referred to as suicide attempt) – a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill himself or herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

The first district employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.

- a. A staff member must notify the Supt./designee.
- b. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.

---

<sup>1</sup> Crosby A., Ortega L., & Melanson C. Self-directed violence surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements. Version 1.0. Atlanta GA: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2011. Available at [www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/selfdirected\\_violence.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/selfdirected_violence.html).

- c. Supt./designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
- d. Supt./designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
- e. Supt./designee will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.
- f. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the Supt./designee will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.
- g. Supt./designee will involve the Social Work team for follow-up and support.
- h. KSSB will request written documentation from any treating facilities prior to a student's return to school.
- i. Student services staff will promptly follow up with any students or staff who might have witnessed the attempt, and contact their parents/guardians. Student Services staff will provide supportive counseling and document all actions taken.
- j. Media representatives should be referred to the appropriate school spokesperson [e.g., Superintendent]

### **Suicide Act or Attempt Not on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity but Reported to a School Employee**

Follow the procedures outlined under Suicide Threat.

### **Suicide of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity**

**Definition** - Suicide – death caused self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

**Note:** The coroner's or medical examiner's office must first confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of death. Schools must adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.

When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the Supt./designee will confer with KSSB's administrative team and

promptly implement crisis response procedures as outlined in the KSSB's Safety Plan. These actions may include the following:

- a. The first district employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.
- b. A staff member must notify the Supt./designee.
- c. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
- d. Supt./designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
- e. Supt./designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
- f. Supt./designee will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.

The Superintendent or his/her designee will:

- a. Verify and obtain as much factual information as possible via police, the parent/guardian, or others who may have the facts depending on circumstances.
- b. Assemble the administrative team and the school's Social Workers; use the procedures outlined in the KSSB Safety Plan if in the evening or over the weekend to insure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
- c. Do not describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents, staff or students unless you have written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner.
- d. Promptly collect and safeguard the student's belongings from desk or locker, any student work or photo or staff belongings from his/her desk (in the event of a staff death). Consult with family members and

determine a mutually agreeable date and time in private, to return these belongings.

- f. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred using written communication if school has already begun, followed by a staff meeting at the conclusion of the day. If the death occurred in the evening, convene a staff meeting prior to the start of school the next day. Outline procedures that will be followed per the School Safety Plan.
- g. Designate space for all postvention activities.
- h. Once obtained, provide funeral arrangements and related details to students, staff via Main Office and parents via written communication.
- i. Refer staff to district's EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for additional support.
- j. Prepare and send a parent information letter home with students following the district's protocol.
- k. Prioritize classrooms and students who will need immediate attention and connect them with KSSB Social Workers or other appropriate resources as determined by student services staff.
- l. Refer media requests to district spokesperson.
- m. Do not disclose any information or details to the media.
- n. Meet with the response team at the end of the day or days during crisis management activities to insure the exchange of important information, as well as to insure communication and further planning of activities.
- o. Check in periodically with the family, staff and students to insure that everyone is supported as much as feasible with the context of the school setting.
- p. Thank those who assisted in the postvention.

## 5. **Actions to Avoid**

- a. Do not announce the death of anyone over the public address system.
- b. Do not hold an assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss suicide.
- c. Avoid canceling school, classes or pre-planned activities unless absolutely necessary; students find comfort in following their normal routine when they are under stress, within reason. Discuss with superintendent prior to proceeding with any cancellations.

## 6. **Memorials**

It is recognized that grieving individuals need a variety of opportunities to personally express their emotions and reactions to this type of death. Memorials must be carefully and tastefully planned, considering a broad range of responses. A variety of activities may in fact occur to celebrate positive remembrances, and these expressions often vary.