

SUSPECTED/ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

Suicide is the third highest cause of death among people aged 15-24. A student suicide has an emotional impact on a school community because it is so tragic and hard to understand. The education of the whole child must go beyond the borders of the classroom. While academic success is important, and is often used as the sole criterion to judge an individual student or an individual school, the physical and emotional well-being of the child must also be considered a priority. Students and staff must be made aware of ways in which they can identify the warning sign and symptoms of students who may have attempted suicide or have the potential to harm themselves. They must also learn what steps they can take in order to ensure that needed help is received. A “postvention” plan must also be established in the event that a suicide occurs.

The following procedure must be followed by any student or staff person who either suspects that a student is suicidal or has reason to believe that an attempt at suicide has been made:

1. Notification

Notify either a counselor or the principal. The counselors will notify the principal if this information is received by them first. Students and staff must understand that:

- a) they have a responsibility to report this suspicion or knowledge of an attempt
- b) it is better to have a student or a friend mad at you than to have a student and friend who is dead
- c) there is a limit to confidentiality

2. Assessment

An assessment based on available information will be made. If the principal is not present in the district, the counselor will follow all procedures deemed appropriate.

- a) If it is believed that the student is “at risk”, the child’s parents will be contacted. No record will be kept if there is only a suspicion that a student may be contemplating suicide. Parents will be informed of their responsibility regarding follow-up.
- b) A list of persons trained in suicide assessment will be suggested by the person making phone contact with the parent. This list will include the Student Assistance Program counselor. A return call from the parent will be requested.
- c) If the student is present at school, the counselor will speak to the student first. If the student is not present at school, the parent will be notified of this fact.

3. Post-Assessment Conference

After a suicide assessment has been completed, a “Crisis Intervention Team” will meet to discuss what has already occurred and what actions, if any, need to be taken. The CIT team will be composed of the principal, guidance counselors, SNT, and designated others.

CIT recommendations may include notification of certain staff, a CSE referral or continued counseling.

In the event that the tragedy of a suicide occurs, the CIT shall meet to discuss a postvention plan. This can include such activities as a brief faculty meeting, a moment of silence, meeting with students and announcing funeral arrangements. Special care should be taken to provide staff and students with known facts, support those who are upset by the event, encourage students to express their feelings, reassure students that there are adults available who can help them and encouraged students to discuss their feelings with their parents. The CIT should avoid closure activities which will tend to glamorize the event or to memorialize.