

E3305 Student Suicide Prevention

This procedure addresses appropriate school responses to suicidal or high risk behaviors by students that should take place in school, at school-sponsored events, and on school buses or vehicles. This procedure is not intended to, nor shall it be interpreted as requiring the School District or its staff to meet a higher legal standard of a duty to warn of a student's suicidal tendencies than that found in Idaho Code 33-512B.

RISK ASSESSMENT TEAM

The building counselor or the Principal when the counselor is not available will assemble a Risk Assessment Team. The Risk Assessment Team will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of district policy and procedure relating to student suicide prevention. The team will at minimum include the building principal, school counselor, a mental health professional and the parent or guardian of the student involved.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff who directly work with students will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention and resources regarding student suicide prevention.

ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

Whenever a student is identified by a staff member as potentially suicidal, or the student informs a staff member of suicidal ideation, the student will be referred to a mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral, if appropriate. If no mental health professional is available, a school nurse or administrator will assume this role until a mental health professional can be accessed. For the duration of time the student is in school or at a school-sponsored event, the following will occur:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student;
2. The building administrator counselor, and the superintendent will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible;
3. The student's parent or guardian may be notified, if appropriate, and assisted, as needed, with accessing a health care professional, unless a delay in notification is warranted;
4. If a health or safety emergency exists, school personnel may share student information with outside professionals. Documentation of the health or safety emergency, the information released, and the entity to whom the information was released shall be maintained.

IN-SCHOOL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

In the event a student attempts suicide while at school or at a school-sponsored event, the following procedures will be followed:

1. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment can be received, following district emergency medical procedures;
1. School staff will continuously supervise the student;
2. All other students will be moved out of the immediate vicinity as quickly as possible;
3. If appropriate, staff will request a mental health assessment for the student;

4. The student's parent or guardian may be contacted, if appropriate, unless a delay in notification is warranted;
5. Staff will immediately notify the building administrator, school counselor and superintendent;
6. Other reasonable actions deemed appropriate by staff at the time of the incident.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

In the event a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-school location, the staff member will:

1. Call 911 to notify police and/or emergency medical services;
2. Inform the student's parent or guardian, if appropriate;
3. Inform the district, building administrator, school counselor and superintendent.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OF SUICIDE RISK

A student's parent or guardian will be notified as soon as practicable by the building administrator or designee in the event a student is believed to be at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt. However, if school staff, in their professional capacity, believe that contacting the parent or guardian would endanger the health or well-being of the student, a delay in notification may occur, and the reasons for the delay shall be documented.

In the event a student has exhibited suicidal behavior, school staff may discuss with the parent or guardian the ability to limit the student's access to mechanisms for carrying out a suicide attempt.

RE-ENTRY PROCEDURE

Students returning to school after a mental health crisis, such as a suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization, and their parent or guardian will meet with the school counselor, building administrator, school counselor and other appropriate school personnel, to discuss reentry and appropriate steps to be taken to ensure the student's readiness for returning to school. The following procedures should be discussed, as appropriate:

1. Coordination and exchange of information with private mental health care providers. Written parental consent will be sought for the exchange of information;
2. Request existing documentation from parent or guardian;
3. Inform staff members with a legitimate educational interest of the student's needs;
4. Designate appropriate staff as point persons to check in with the student, address any concerns, and help the student readjust to the school setting.

POSTVENTION

Postvention is a crisis intervention strategy utilized in those instances where a student suicide has occurred. If the student suicide occurred at school or at a school sponsored event, 911 will be immediately called. The determination as to whether or when the student's parent or guardian will be informed by school personnel will occur based on direction from law enforcement.

A Risk Assessment Team consisting of the building administrator, school counselor, and any other relevant individuals will meet as soon as practicable following the news of the suicide death and develop an action plan.

The team will seek out as much information as possible to assist in the development of an appropriate action plan. The action plan may include the following steps:

1. Assessment of the situation, including reviewing such issues as how severely the death will likely affect other students; how recently other traumatic events have occurred within the school community; the time of year of the death;
2. The initial sharing of information of a student death will be reported to staff, students and parents/guardians with an acknowledgment that its cause is unknown, if a cause of death ruling has not been made. If the cause of death has been confirmed as suicide but the parent or guardian does not permit the cause of death to be disclosed or the information has not been released to the public, the school will not share the cause of death but will use the opportunity to discuss suicide prevention with students.
3. In the event siblings of the student attend the same school or other schools, appropriate personnel will be notified to address the needs of the siblings.
4. The team may draft a statement for staff members to share with students including the basic facts of the death and funeral arrangements, if known, recognition of the sorrow the news will cause, and information about resources available to help students cope with grief. Public address system announcements and school-wide assemblies will be avoided, if possible.
5. The team may draft a letter addressed to parents and guardians to be sent home with students that includes basic facts available to the public about the death, information about what the school is doing to support students, the warning signs of suicidal behavior, and a list of resources available.
6. Staff will receive similar information as provided to parents and guardians in a staff meeting, if possible. The crisis team will inform staff of the signs to be looking for in order to identify and provide appropriate services to other high risk students to prevent another student suicide attempt or death.
7. Counseling will be made available at the school to students and staff affected by the death to assist them and to help determine the level of support that they may need. To the extent possible, school personnel will help coordinate support services for students and staff in need of individual and small group counseling.
8. To the extent possible, school staff will refer students or staff to community mental health care providers to assist in a smooth transition from the crisis intervention phase to meet underlying or ongoing mental health needs.
9. The school will not create on-campus physical memorials (i.e., photos, flowers), or funeral services as such actions may glamorize or sensationalize the death and encourage other similar actions. School will not be cancelled for the funeral. Any school discussions will a focus on how to prevent future suicides and prevention resources available.
10. The Risk Assessment Team will identify the individual who will be the media spokesperson for the district. All inquiries received by staff from the media or other persons will be directed to the spokesperson. The designated spokesperson will:
 - a. Keep the Principal, school counselor and superintendent informed of school actions related to the death;
 - b. Prepare a statement for the media including basic facts of the death, postvention plans, and available resources. Any oral or written statement of any kind will not include confidential information, speculation of victim motivation, means of suicide, or personal family information.
 - c. Answer media inquiries and encourage reporters not to sensationalize the death or link bullying to suicide, or speculate about the reason for suicide. The media should further be encouraged to offer the community information on suicide risk factors, warning signs and resources available.

11. Appropriate staff will be informed and prepared regarding how to direct phone calls, emails or other communications received regarding the incident and what information can be released.
12. Other appropriate actions will be taken as deemed appropriate based on the circumstances.

Policy History:

Adopted: February 2018

Legal Reference:

Adapted from the Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention, which was developed through a collaborative effort by the Trevor Project, the American School Counselor Association and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

33-512B – Suicidal Tendencies – Duty to Warn