

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention**

The Board recognizes that suicide is a complex issue and that while the school may recognize potentially suicidal youth, it cannot make clinical assessment of risk and provide in-depth counseling but must refer the youth to an appropriate place for such assessment and counseling.

Any school employee who may have knowledge of a suicide threat must take the proper steps to report this information to the Building Principal or his/her designee who will, in turn, notify the appropriate school officials, the student's family and appropriate resource services.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221(e) Boards of education to prescribe rules.

PA 89-168 Child abuse and the prevention of youth suicide

Policy adopted: June 26, 2006

EAST HAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
East Hampton, Connecticut

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention

#### 1. Students at Risk

School staff members who have reason to believe a student is at risk for suicide, must immediately bring that student's name to the attention of the Principal or his/her designee. This must be done even if the student has confided in the staff person and asked the staff person to keep their discussion confidential.

- A. Following the referral from a staff member, the Principal or his/her designee will gather background information prior to contacting the student, unless there appears to be imminent risk of self harm. This background check, including a written report from the referring staff member; should be done on the same day as the referral. The Crisis Resource Team will then convene to discuss the circumstances and to develop a plan for dealing with the student.
- B. Immediately following the collection of information, contact with the student will be made to determine the seriousness of the situation.
  1. A staff member will stay with the student to offer support. In addition, he/she will explain to the student that someone will be contacting the student's parent(s)/guardian because of the staff's deep concern.
  2. A staff member will notify the parent(s)/guardian and request that they come to the school immediately.
  3. When the parent(s)/guardian arrives at school, the Principal or designated Crisis Team member(s) will meet with them. The following points should be covered in the meeting:
    - a) The seriousness of the situation.
    - b) The need for an immediate suicide risk evaluation at a medical or mental health facility.
    - c) The need for continued monitoring of the student at home if he/she is released following the evaluation.
    - d) A request for parent(s)/guardian to sign a release of information form for communication between the school and facility to which the student will be taken, the student's therapist and other appropriate individuals.

## **Students**

### **Suicide Prevention/Intervention**

#### **1. Students at Risk** (continued)

4. If the parent(s)/guardian cannot be contacted or if they refuse to come to school and the Crisis Team determines that a medical emergency exists, normal procedures for such emergencies will be followed.
5. If the parent(s)/guardian refuse to come to school or if they come but refuse to cooperate, a medical neglect report will be filed with the Department of Children and Youth Services (CYS-136).
6. Follow-up:
  - a) The following day the Crisis Team will meet to develop a plan of action for in-school support of the student. (See Emergency Supervision Plan)
  - b) If the student is in school, a Crisis Team member or members will meet with the student to offer continuing support.
  - c) The Crisis Team will continue to monitor the student and will meet periodically to review the case.

#### **2. General Procedures After-School Hours**

- A. If a staff member has become aware of a potentially suicidal student during after-school hours, he/she should:
  - 1) Contact the parent(s)/guardian, or if unavailable,
  - 2) Contact the police (Dial 911)
- B. At that time or no later than the following school day, the staff member will notify the Principal or his/her designee of the situation regarding the potentially suicidal student.
- C. When the student returns to school, the Principal or designee will meet with appropriate staff to develop a plan of action for in-school support of the student.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention (continued)

#### 3. In-School Suicide Attempt

- A. The staff person who becomes aware of the attempt will immediately inform the Principal or his/her designee and call for the nurse.
- B. The Principal or his/her designee and nurse will follow school medical emergency procedures.
- C. An emergency meeting of the Crisis Resource Team will be called to develop a plan of action and to delegate responsibilities.
- D. The parent(s)/guardian will be contacted in accordance with medical emergency procedures.
- E. If students and/or staff have witnessed the attempt, the following actions will be taken:
  - 1. Make arrangements to have someone cover the staff member(s) class while designated Crisis Team members meet with the staff member(s) to discuss their observation: if the staff members are able to return to class, encourage them to do so, but discourage them from talking about the attempt with students.
  - 2. Assign a Crisis Team member(s) to meet with student(s) individually or in small groups who have witnessed the attempt, and offer individual support to those who need it. If student(s) are able to return to class, they should be encouraged to do so, but they should be discouraged from talking to other students about the attempt. Students should only be permitted to leave school early in the company of their parent(s)/guardian or other responsible adult.
- F. Follow-up
  - 1. In every way possible, an attempt shall be made to maintain a normal or "typical" school day schedule and environment.
  - 2. Staff members will encourage students who seem distressed to seek help from the Crisis Resource Team members or appropriate staff.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention

#### 3. In-School Suicide Attempt (continued)

3. An after-school full staff meeting may be called to review the day's events, identify students who may be in need of extra support and develop a plan to monitor and support those students whose own risk may be increased as a result of the suicide attempt.
4. If knowledge of the attempt is widespread throughout the school, teachers may be asked to follow "Guidelines for Talking to Students About Suicide/Sudden Death," (available in school office). Staff members who are uncomfortable doing this will be assisted by a Crisis Resource Team member or other appropriate staff.
5. The administration and appropriate staff members will meet with parent(s)/guardian to plan the student's transition back to school, strongly encourage them to follow through on counseling referrals and attempt to "suicide-proof" their home. Release forms for sharing information between school and therapist should be returned and periodic contact with family and therapist should be scheduled.
6. The administration will assign an appropriate staff member to meet with the returning student and provide support upon his/her return to school.

#### 4. Out-Of-School Suicide Attempt (Report during school hours)

- A. The staff member who receives information concerning an attempted suicide will immediately contact the Principal or his/her designee who will try to verify the information.
- B. The Principal or his/her designee will call a meeting of the Crisis Resource Team in order to develop a plan of action and to delegate responsibilities.
- C. A Crisis Team member will notify the parent(s)/guardian and request that they come to the school as soon as is reasonable.
- D. The Principal or his/her designee, Crisis Resource Team, and parent(s)/guardian will meet to develop an appropriate plan of action which could include emergency medical intervention, mental health evaluation, and/or crisis intervention placement.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention

#### 4. Out-Of-School Suicide Attempt (Report during school hours) (continued)

- E. The administration and appropriate staff members will meet with parent(s)/guardian to plan the student's transition back to school, strongly encourage them to follow through on counseling referrals and to "suicide-proof" their home. Release forms for sharing information between school and therapist should be returned and periodic contact with family and therapist should be scheduled.
- F. If the attempt is public knowledge, teachers should be informed. If knowledge of the attempted suicide is widespread and causing visible distress among the majority of students, staff members may be asked to follow "Guidelines for Talking to Students About Suicide/Sudden Death," (available in school office). Staff members who are uncomfortable doing this will be assisted by a Crisis Team member or appropriate staff. An after-school meeting may be held to identify other "at-risk" students and discuss concerns. If an attempt is not public, staff should be informed on a "need-to-know" basis.
- G. Develop a plan to monitor and support "at-risk" students. If circumstances warrant, contact the parent(s)/guardian of "at-risk" student(s).
- H. If appropriate, contact Principal of the sibling's school to share information about the attempt. Sibling(s) should not be contacted, however, without prior consent from the parent(s)/guardian, except in emergency situations.
- I. Follow-up:
  - 1) In every way possible an attempt shall be made to maintain a normal or "typical" school day schedule and environment.
  - 2) Staff will encourage students who seem distressed to seek help from the Crisis Resource Team members or appropriate staff.
  - 3) If knowledge of the attempt later becomes widespread throughout the school, teachers may be asked to follow "Guidelines for Talking to Students About Suicide/Sudden Death," (available in school office). Staff who are uncomfortable doing this, will be assisted by a Crisis Resource Team member or appropriate staff.
  - 4) An after-school full staff meeting may be called to review the day's events, identify students who may be in need of extra support and develop a plan to monitor and support those students whose own risk may be increased as a result of the suicide attempt.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention (continued)

#### 4. Out-Of-School Suicide Attempt (Report during school hours) (continued)

- 5) The administration will assign a Crisis Resource Team member to meet with the returning student and provide ongoing support upon his/her return to school.

#### 5. Student Confidentiality

- A. Every effort shall be made to maintain student confidentiality in accordance with Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulations.

#### 6. Guidelines For Talking To Students About Suicide/Sudden Death

- A. Prepare students for the serious and tragic nature of the information you are about to share with them. Say that it is expected that this news will upset many of them and that both you and other staff are there to help them get through this.
- B. Announce the facts of the situation and what actions are being taken as a result (i.e., all classes are being informed, counseling centers are being set up, etc.)
- C. Allow students to react; pay special attention to the following:
  - a) Dispel any rumors or unconfirmed information.
  - b) Stress that we each react differently to tragedies and must respect one another's feelings and ways of reacting.
  - c) Point out that grief, sadness, anger, guilt, fear and disbelief are all normal reactions to such news.
- D. Convey a sense of acceptance for all the feeling expressed, avoid judgmental or value statements about anyone's feeling.
- E. Note that some people's feelings will be stronger than others and that individual help is available (name, where and with whom) for those who want to discuss their feelings further with someone.
- F. If student's reactions seem particularly intense or you feel unable to respond to them adequately, strongly encourage them to seek assistance from one of the designated counseling centers. Offer to accompany them to the center after class. Refer to Crisis Resource Team.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention

#### 6. Guidelines For Talking To Students About Suicide/Sudden Death (continued)

- G. If students have questions you are unable to answer or if you are feeling uncomfortable in the discussion, summon a Crisis Resource Team member to assist you.
- H. Encourage students to be supportive of one another, but stress the importance of seeking help or encouraging their friends to seek help from adults if their feelings seem more intense or persistent than "normal."
- I. Reassure students that they are not responsible for what happened - discourage guilt and unrealistic "hindsight regrets." Instead, focus discussion on how they might use what they now know to avoid similar tragedies in the future.
- J. Stress that the feelings students now have are temporary and will diminish with time; display your own sense of assurance that things will get better.
- K. In cases of suicide, avoid glamorizing the death or dead person. Stress that this was a tragic and unnecessary event. Avoid memorial tributes.
- L. In cases of suicide, avoid focusing on the details or circumstances that led up to the person's death; stress that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and focus discussion on how the person might have gotten help to avoid this tragic ending. Stress that suicide is not a normal reaction to life's setbacks.
- M. Allow students who do not want to participate in the discussion to study quietly in the room or seek assistance from one of the counseling centers. Don't assume that the lack of a visible reaction means the student has no reaction.
- N. Allow as much time as students seem to need for the discussion. Try to move discussion toward how students can help one another express sympathy for the family and help to prevent (in the case of suicide) similar tragedies.
- O. End the class by reminding students of the counseling and support services that are available.

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention (continued)

#### 7. Primary Prevention Of Suicide

The East Hampton Public Schools will provide the following:

- A. Conduct, and encourage others to conduct, activities designed to raise student, parent, staff and community awareness about the problem of youth suicide,
- B. Promote activities designed for youth to increase opportunities for meaningful involvement, develop basic life long coping skills and provide a reward structure that recognizes each young person's inherent worth and abilities,
- C. Promote positive youth development training programs for school staff, parents, social /recreational program leaders and other adults involved with youth, and
- D. Establish more extensive linkages between the schools and community and also facilitate appropriate student referrals.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221(e) Boards of education to prescribe rules.

Regulation approved: June 26, 2006

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