

Guidance on Suicide Prevention

The purpose of this guidance is to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to threats of suicide. The District:

- Recognizes that physical and mental health are integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and beyond graduation
- Further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people
- Has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide
- Acknowledges the school's role in providing an environment that is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and helps to foster positive development and resilience
- Acknowledges that comprehensive suicide prevention procedures include prevention, intervention, and postvention components

This guidance is intended to be paired with existing policies and procedures supporting the overall emotional and behavioral health of students.

Staff Professional Learning

All staff receive, at minimum, annual professional learning via the AEA Online Learning system. This learning includes risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The learning includes additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide. Additional professional learning on risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to school employees serving on the building Crisis Response Team as well as all school counselors and school nurses.

Prevention

Developmentally appropriate, student-centered curriculum shall be taught to all K-12 students. The content of the curriculum shall include the importance of making safe and healthy choices, identifying coping strategies, building resilience, and recognizing risk factors and signs of mental health conditions in oneself and others. In addition, schools shall provide small-group prevention-focused programming for students.

Intervention

When a student is identified by a peer, educator, or other sources as potentially suicidal (i.e verbalizes thoughts of suicide, presents overt risk factors, self-harm) the student shall be referred to trained staff (i.e. counselor, nurse, site-based therapist) immediately to assess risk and facilitate referral if necessary. Trained staff will use the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) to assess the level of risk and respond accordingly.

Postvention

In the event of a death by suicide, the District partners with Grant Wood Area Education Agency and their Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team. The CISM team consists of trained district and non-district educators who respond to crisis incidents to assist with communication plans, debriefing with students and staff, and making referrals to outside agencies.