

REGULATION

GLEN RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

R 5350 PUPIL SUICIDE

The following regulations are established for guidance of staff members in recognizing the pupil who contemplates suicide, in responding to threatened or attempted suicide, and in preventing contagion when a pupil commits suicide. Because a prompt response may be essential to a pupil's life, the designation of a district position in these regulations includes the person who holds that position and, if the position holder is absent or unavailable, the person temporarily charged with the responsibilities of the position.

A. Recognition of Potential Suicide

All school personnel, both teaching staff members and support staff members, shall be alert to any sign that a pupil may be contemplating suicide. Such signs include, but are not necessarily limited to, a pupil's:

1. Overt suggestion, regardless of its context, that he/she is considering or has considered suicide or has worked out the details of a suicide attempt;
2. Evidence of preparation of a will, intention to dispose of his/her effects and belongings, or otherwise get life "in order";
3. Obsession with death or afterlife;
4. Possession of a weapon or other means of suicide or obsession with such means;
5. Sense of hopelessness or unrelieved sadness;
6. Lethargy or despondency, or, conversely, a tendency to become more impulsive or aggressive than usual;
7. Drop in academic achievement, slacking off of energy and effort, or inability to focus on studies;
8. Isolation from others by loss of friends, withdrawal from friends, lack of companionship, or family disintegration;
9. Preoccupation with nonexistent physical ills;

10. Loss of weight, appetite, and/or sleep;

11. Substance abuse; and

12. Loss of economic resources.

B. Response to Potential Suicide

1. Any indication of a potential suicide, whether personally witnessed or received by report from another, must be taken seriously and must be reported to the Principal immediately.

2. The Principal shall immediately inform the Child Study Team, which shall investigate the matter promptly and conduct such evaluations as may be appropriate.

3. The Principal will inform the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), in a conference if possible, of the signs demonstrated by the pupil and of the district's concern and seek parental approval of the pupil's evaluation. In the event parental abuse or neglect is suspected, the Principal or the employee who forms the suspicion will immediately so inform the Division of Youth and Family Services in accordance with Policy No. 8462.

4. If the threat of suicide is immediate and serious, the Principal may appoint teaching staff members and/or Child Study Team members to a suicide intervention team, which shall determine the potential of the threat by directly questioning the pupil, without mincing words, about:

a. Whether any suicide plans have been made, how detailed the plans are, and whether any preliminary actions have been taken,

b. The pupil's feelings of hopelessness and the length of time the pupil has had such feelings,

c. The pupil's thoughts of suicide and how persistent and strong those thoughts are, and

d. Whether the pupil has considered alternative courses of action to resolve his/her problems.

5. After gathering information, the suicide intervention team shall determine the life-threatening risk of the situation based

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on the pupil's signs of possible suicide (¶A1) and the pupil's responses to questioning.

6. If it is determined that a substantial risk of suicide exists, the Suicide Intervention Team shall:

a. Assign staff members as required to assure that the pupil is never out of the presence of an adult who has been fully informed that the pupil may be in danger of self-destruction,

b. Refer the pupil to the Child Study Team for comprehensive evaluation,

c. Notify the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) immediately and strongly recommend consultation with a licensed mental health professional or agency,

d. Request the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to sign a release of information form authorizing the chosen mental health professional or agency to share with appropriate district personnel such relevant information as premature termination of treatment, additional threats and/or attempts of suicide, and continuing warning signs.

7. A member of the Suicide Intervention Team will be appointed to follow up on the pupil's progress and to determine whether the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) has consulted a mental health professional or agency. Follow up reports must be made to the Principal. Pupils cannot return to school without medical clearance from a psychiatrist.

8. If the pupil's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) does not sign the release of information form or does not cooperate in a comprehensive Child Study Team evaluation or does not seek treatment for the pupil, the Principal shall inform the Division of Youth and Family Services.

C. Response to Suicide Attempt

1. Any attempted suicide, whether or not on school premises or during the school day, must be reported immediately to the Principal.

2. The staff member who witnesses a suicide attempt on school premises or at a school sponsored event or in the course of school-related travel shall render first aid in accordance with Policy No. 8441 and summon medical assistance as appropriate.

3. Procedures outlined at ¶B2 through ¶B8 above will be followed.

D. Prevention of Suicide Contagion

1. All district Principals will be promptly informed when a pupil of this district commits suicide.

2. Each Principal will assemble teaching staff members prior to the opening of school to provide them with accurate information, plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of pupils.

3. The Principal of the school or building that the victim attended will assign a crisis team from the pupil personnel staff to assist the staff in dealing with the general school situation and any individual problems that may arise.

4. The suicide will not be given prominence by public announcement or a school-wide assembly. School will not be closed in order to permit pupils and staff members to attend the victim's funeral.

5. Teachers will respond to the needs of pupils with as little interruption of the educational program as possible.

6. Pupils will be provided with accurate information and will be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings of loss and their memories of the victim, both good and bad, without penalty.

7. All school personnel shall be especially alert to signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.

8. Teaching staff members, under the direction of the Principal, shall attempt to prevent social contagion by:

a. Preventing glorification or romanticization of the suicide,

b. Helping pupils recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems,

c. Encouraging pupils to ask probing questions when a fellow pupil suggests suicide and to report such suggestions to a teaching staff member, and

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d. Discussing ways of handling depression and anxiety without resort to self-destruction.

9. Pupils who were close to the victim, and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s), shall be offered special counseling services and notified of available community mental health services.

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