

KEYSTONE OAKS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Policy Guide



Policy No. 809

Section OPERATIONS

Title SUICIDE AWARENESS
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Adopted NOVEMBER 17, 2015

Revised _____

	POLICY NO. 809 SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE	
Section 1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>The Board is committed to maintaining a safe school environment; to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students; to promote healthy development; and to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources. The impact of students' mental health on their academic performance and the effect of mental health issues and suicide on students and the entire school community are significant.</p> <p>Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and welfare of students, the District will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources necessary to prevent suicide and promote mental well-being.</p>	<p>SC 1526 Pol. 103.1, 248, 256, 806</p>
Section 2	<p><u>Authority</u></p> <p>In compliance with state law and regulations and in support of the Keystone Oaks School District's suicide prevention measures, this policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following</p>	<p>Title 22 Sec. 12.12 Pol. 216</p>

<p>Section 3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">POLICY NO. 809 SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE</p> <p>a student’s suicide threat or attempt that does not occur on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel. Information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents/guardians, the program supervisor, building principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.</p> <p><u>Definitions</u></p> <p>At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.</p> <p>Crisis Response Team shall include, but may not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, mental health therapists, and school resource officers, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Community mental agency resources may be called for assistance to be a part of the team.</p> <p>Expressed Suicidal Thoughts or Intentions shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die, but has not acted on the behavior.</p> <p>Prevention refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.</p> <p>Risk Factors shall mean the personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide. People affected by one or more of these risk factors have a greater probability of suicidal behavior.</p> <p>School Connectedness shall mean the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.</p> <p>School Personnel include, but may not be limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, custodians, and cafeteria workers.</p>	

<p>Section 4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">POLICY NO. 809</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE</p> <p>Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.</p> <p>Suicidal Act or Suicide Attempt shall mean a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill him/herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.</p> <p>Warning Signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future.</p> <p><u>Guidelines</u></p> <p>The District shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.</p> <p>The District shall notify district employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the district’s website.</p>	<p>SC 1526</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION</p> <p><u>Protocols for Administration of Student Education</u></p> <p>Students shall receive age-appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education or other appropriate curricula on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer peers for help. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Students shall be taught not to make promises of confidentiality when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. These lessons may be taught by health and physical education teachers, community service providers, classroom teachers or student services staff. Students who are in need of intervention shall be referred in accordance with the District’s referral procedures for screening and recommendations.</p>	<p>SC 1526</p>

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Student education may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Information about suicide prevention. Resources are available on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (PDE’s) website– www.education.pa.gov
2. Help-seeking approaches amongst students, promoting a climate that encourages peer referral and emphasizes school connectedness.
3. Increasing students’ ability to recognize if they or their peers are at risk for suicide.
4. Addressing problems that can lead to suicide, such as depression and other mental health issues, anger, and drug use.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All District employees shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

As part of the District’s professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training at least every five (5) years. Professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades kindergarten through five (5) shall participate in two (2) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training at least every (5) years.

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to school counselors, District mental health professionals, social workers, school nurses and school psychologists.

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Resources for Parents/Guardians

The District may provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral/mental health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION

The methods of prevention utilized by the District include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

Suicide Prevention Coordinators

District-wide:

A District-wide suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Superintendent. This may be an existing District employee. The District Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy. The District Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall investigate on cases involving peer-to-peer harassment, as required under federal law and Board Policy. The designee will help identify overlapping risk factors, including hostile environments created by persistent or severe harassment on the basis of gender, race, disability, or other protected classes.

Building Level:

Any school personnel who are made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm that is written, drawn, spoken, or threatened shall immediately notify the building principal or the District-wide Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Any threat in any form shall be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidentiality promised. In cases of life-threatening situations, a student's confidentiality will be waived. The school entity's crisis response procedures shall be implemented.

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If an expressed suicidal thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during an afterschool program and the building principal or the Suicide Prevention Coordinator are not available, the school personnel shall call the Allegheny County Crisis Intervention Hotline 1-866-796-8226, 1-800-SUICIDE, or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Thereafter, immediately inform the principal of the incident and actions taken.

Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the District's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, district employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

Risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but are not limited to:

- Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
 - Depression
 - Substance abuse or dependence
 - Long term use of a medication that according to the FDA may lead to increased risk of suicide
 - Previous suicide attempts
 - Self-injury

- Personal Characteristics:
 - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem
 - Loneliness/social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging
 - Poor problem-solving or coping skills
 - Impulsivity/risk-taking/recklessness

- Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:
 - Interpersonal difficulties or losses
 - Disciplinary or legal problems
 - Bullying (victim or perpetrator)
 - School or work issues
 - Physical, sexual or psychological abuse
 - Exposure to peer suicide

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- Family Characteristics:
 - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior
 - Family mental health problems
 - Divorce/death of parent/guardian
 - Parental-child relationship

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose
- Recklessness or risky behavior
- Increase alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawal from friends, family or society
- Dramatic mood changes

Referral Procedures

Any District employee who has identified a student with one (1) or more risk factors, warning signs or who has an indication that student may be contemplating suicide or self-harm, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention to the school counselors.

Documentation

The District shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

	<p style="text-align: center;">POLICY NO. 809 SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">METHODS OF INTERVENTION</p> <p>The methods of intervention utilized by the District include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in school, suicide attempts outside of school and complete suicide. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.</p> <p><u>Procedures for Students at Risk</u></p> <p>A district-approved suicide assessment instrument may be utilized by trained mental health staff such as school counselors, school psychologists, or social workers.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians of a student identified as being at risk shall be notified by the school. If the school suspects that the student’s risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, school staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.</p> <p>If the parent or guardian refuse to cooperate and there is any doubt regarding the child’s safety, the school personnel who directly witnessed the expressed suicidal thought or intention will pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling County Emergency Services at 412-350-4457 and ask for a delegate. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If a 302 involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from the principal or other central office administrator.</p> <p>The District shall identify mental health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance.</p> <p>Mental health service providers may include, but are not limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and primary care providers.</p> <p>The District shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student’s family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.</p>	<p>SC 1526</p> <p>Pol. 806</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">POLICY NO. 809 SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE</p> <p><u>Students with Disabilities</u></p> <p>For students with disabilities, who are identified as being at-risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p> <p>If a student is identified as being at-risk for suicide or attempts suicide and requires special education services or accommodations, the Supervisor of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.</p> <p><u>Documentation</u></p> <p>The District shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT</p> <p>The methods of response to suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by the District include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notifying students, employees and parent/guardians. 2. Working with families. 3. Responding appropriately to the media. 4. Collaborating with community providers. <p>The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event.</p>	<p>Pol. 103.1, 113, 113.1, 114</p> <p>Pol. 103.1, 113, 113.1, 114</p> <p>SC 1526</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">POLICY NO. 809</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE</p> <p><u>Re-Entry Procedures</u></p> <p>A student’s excusal from school attendance after an absence due to significant psychological and/or behavioral distress and the student’s return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.</p> <p>A District-contracted mental health professional, the building principal, the school counselor or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to school after an absence due to significant psychological and/or behavioral distress, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student’s readiness to return to school.</p> <p>When authorized by the student’s parent/guardian, the designated District employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.</p> <p>The designated District employee will periodically check-in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into the school community and address any concerns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">REPORT PROCEDURES</p> <p>Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.</p> <p>When a District employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.</p> <p>As stated in this policy, District employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.</p> <p>The District Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall provide the Superintendent or designee with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to school counselors, District mental health professionals and school nurses.</p>	<p>Pol. 103.1, 113, 113.2, 113.3, 117, 204</p> <p>Pol. 204</p> <p>SC 1526</p>
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