

Regulation

SUICIDE AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

General: The following procedures are to be used for suicide prevention and for identification and intervention with students at risk for suicide and other self-destructive behaviors.

Identification of Suicidal Ideation

A. School personnel and students should be alert to the warning signs of suicide:

1. Depressed mood;
2. Changes in sleep and/or appetite patterns;
3. Decline in school performance;
4. Increased social withdrawal;
5. Loss of interest and pleasure in previously enjoyable activities;
6. Preoccupation with themes of death;
7. Increased irritability and behavior problems;
8. Verbal expressions about self-death;
9. Giving away important possessions;
10. Use of alcohol or drugs;
11. History of physical, mental, emotional or sexual abuse;
12. History of learning disabilities combined with sense of failure;
13. Frequent sleeping disorders or complaints;
14. Sudden interest in dangerous or uncharacteristic risk-taking activities;
15. Inattention to personal hygiene;
16. Rebelliousness, belligerence;
17. Depression or grief following loss of emotionally supportive "significant other" relationships;
18. Sudden lifting of severe depression; and
19. Recent withdrawal from therapy or psychological counseling.

B. The staff will be made aware of signs of suicide risk and instructed in the board policy related to suicide by the school counselor or child study team member or appropriate and approved outside agency.

Intervention for Potential Suicide

A. A Potentially Suicidal Student

1. The staff member shall notify the principal immediately and may notify the school counselor or child study team member;
2. The student shall be supervised by an adult staff member at all times;
3. To assure the safety of the student, the school counselor or child study team member will meet immediately with the student to assess the situation;
4. When it is determined that there is a reasonable basis for concern, the principal shall contact the parent/guardian to review all aspects of the incident;
5. The following may be required:
 - a. If parent/guardian is unable to pick up student, the student will be transported to the nearest local hospital by ambulance;
 - b. If parent/guardian refuses to pick up student, appropriate social agency will be called;
 - c. The principal will notify the classroom teacher of actions taken by confidential communication.
 - d. The principal will as soon as practical inform the superintendent of the incident and the actions taken;

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- e. The superintendent shall inform the board president.

B. Attempted Suicide Outside of School

1. When any staff member hears of an attempted suicide, they will notify the school counselor or child study team member;
2. The school counselor or child study team member shall contact the parents/guardians to offer assistance and referral services;
3. The school counselor or child study team member will notify the principal of the incident and any actions taken;
4. The principal shall notify the superintendent of the incident and any actions taken.

C. Attempted Suicide in School

1. First aid will be administered by the school nurse and 911 shall be alerted immediately;
2. An available staff member shall notify the principal immediately;
3. The student shall be kept under close supervision at all times;
4. The principal will contact the parent/guardian immediately;
5. The school nurse or a staff member designated by the principal will accompany the student to the hospital via first aid squad if the parent/guardian is not present;
6. The principal will notify the superintendent;
7. The superintendent shall inform the board president;
8. The school counselor or child study team member will file an incident report, place it in a confidential file, and notify the program director and superintendent/principal.

D. Prior to a student's return to school, the following procedures must be adhered to:

1. Parent/guardian must notify the nurse at least 24 hours in advance of the anticipated date of their child's return to school;
2. The parent/guardian shall provide the written certification of a physician that the student is well enough to return to school;
3. A conference may be required that may include the school nurse, the principal, the school counselor, parent/guardian, and the student as appropriate before the student may return to school. The purpose of this conference is to develop a re-entry plan for the child;
4. A physician's analysis and/or hospital discharge summary, which includes a report of the student's diagnosis and prognosis, is required to be presented at this conference.

E. Completed Suicide

1. The principal shall verify any reported suicide of a student before any actions may be taken;
2. The principal shall meet with the staff to review the report. A crisis intervention team may be established at this time;
3. The teachers will be given guidelines for discussing the situation in the classroom setting;
4. All media inquiries shall be handled by the superintendent;
5. Student will be allowed to attend the funeral with parental permission. Any staff member directly involved with the student will be allowed to attend services.

Self-Injury

Self-injury is any deliberate, non-suicidal behavior that inflicts physical harm on your body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress.

Physical pain is often easier to deal with than emotional pain, because it causes 'real' feelings. Injuries can prove to an individual that their emotional pain is real and valid. Self-injurious behavior may calm or awaken a person. Self-injury only provides temporary relief. It does not release the underlying inner conflict. Self-injury can become a habitual, chronic and repetitive response to the stresses of day-to-day life and can escalate in frequency and severity.

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A. Self-injury can include but is not limited to:

1. Cutting;
2. Burning;
3. Banging and bruising;
4. Non-suicidal overdosing; and
5. Deliberate bone-breaking.

B. People who self-injure usually make a great effort to hide their injuries and scars, and are often uncomfortable about discussing their emotional inner or physical outer pain.

Procedures for Identification and Intervention for Self-Injuring Behavior

A. Risk Factors Associated with Self-Injury

Self-injury is a coping mechanism and it is important to recognize and respond to the underlying reasons behind a person's self-injury. Risk factors include, but are not limited to:

1. Low self-esteem;
2. Perfectionism;
3. Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety;
4. The onset of a more complicated mental illness such as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder or a personality disorder;
5. Problems at home or school;
6. Physical, emotional or sexual abuse;

B. Warning Signs

As noted above, there may be no warning signs, but some of the things below might indicate that a student is suffering internally which may lead to self-injury:

1. Drug and/or alcohol misuse or risk taking behavior;
2. Negativity and lack of self-esteem;
3. Out of character behavior;
4. Bullying other students;
5. A sudden change in friends or withdrawal from a group.

C. Physical signs that self-injury may be occurring:

1. Obvious cuts, scratches or burns that do not appear of an accidental nature;
2. Frequent 'accidents' that cause physical injury;
3. Regularly bandaged arms and/or wrists;
4. Reluctance to take part in physical exercise or other activities that require a change of clothes;
5. Wearing long sleeves and trousers even during hot weather.

D. Intervention for Suspected Self-Injury

1. When a teaching staff member or other instructional personnel suspects that a student may be self-injuring, he/she shall report the name of that student immediately to the school nurse and the principal;
2. In the absence of the principal, his/her duties under this policy shall be performed by an administrative designee;
3. The principal will consult with the school nurse to determine if a referral to emergency medical services is necessary. The final decision to refer a student shall rest with the principal;

NOTE: In instances where the student is physically dangerous to him/herself or others, the principal

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shall summon the local law enforcement and/or emergency medical services for the purpose of transporting the student to the emergency room.

4. The principal shall notify the parents/guardians, if the student has an injury, to come to school. The principal shall request a conference to discuss the matter;
5. The principal shall notify the superintendent of the incident and actions taken;
6. The injured student shall be monitored by the school nurse until safely released to the parents/guardians or back to class as appropriate;
7. When requested by students, parents or guardians, or required under the policy, Somerville Board of Education will provide information on local or county agencies that will assist them in dealing with self-injury.

Suicide Reporting

- A. Teachers, volunteers, interns and all other school staff with reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a student has attempted or completed suicide shall report the suspicion to the principal;
- B. Any employee, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a student has attempted or completed suicide, shall report the information to the Department Children and Families. The information shall be reported in the form and manner prescribed by the Department Children and Families
- C. An employee, volunteer, or intern who has reported attempted or completed suicide to the Department Children and Families (DCF), shall notify the principal of the reported suspicion, if they did not notify the principal prior to reporting to DCF;
- D. The principal or his or her designee may assist the staff member, volunteer or intern in making the report to the Department Children and Families (DCF). Assistance may include:
 1. Distributing the board policy and procedure 5141.4 Missing, Abused and Neglected Children;
 2. Distributing the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services Suicide or Suicide Attempt Questionnaire to the staff member;
 3. Directing the staff member, volunteer or intern to the DCF website and the electronic reporting form at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/prevention/suicidereportingform.htm>;
 4. Provide information regarding confidentiality of reporting;
- E. The principal shall notify the superintendent of any incident where a staff member, volunteer or intern has reported to the principal and/or DCF that a student has attempted or completed suicide;
- F. The principal or his or her designee shall keep a written record of any reported incidents of attempted or completed suicide including:
 1. The date and time the incident was reported;
 2. The name of the staff member, volunteer or intern who reported the incident.

The staff member, volunteer or intern that that reports attempted or completed suicide shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability on account of that report, unless the person has acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

Staff members, volunteers or interns shall not be required to disclose, or penalized for the failure to disclose, any information which would be privileged according to law (N.J.S.A. 2A:84A-18 through -23).

Adopted:

Revised:

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Readopted: