

SELF-HARM AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

POLICY

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors recognizes that suicidal behaviors are complex issues, a major cause of death among youth, and should be taken seriously. While school staff may recognize potentially suicidal youth and the District can conduct an initial risk assessment, the District cannot provide in-depth mental health counseling. Instead, the Board directs school staff to refer students who exhibit suicidal behaviors to an appropriate service provider for further assessment and counseling.

The Board also recognizes the need for youth suicide prevention procedures and will establish programs to (1) identify risk factors for youth suicide; (2) intervene with such youth; (3) provide referral services; (4) follow-up on a completed suicide; and (5) offer training for teachers, other school staff, and students to provide proper assistance.

School staff members who have knowledge of a suicide threat will take the proper steps to support the student and to report this information to the building principal or supervising staff who will in turn notify the appropriate school officials, the student's family, and appropriate resource services.

The Superintendent will develop and implement procedures to achieve the Board's goals and objectives regarding prevention and response.

Cross References:

Policy No. 5580: Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

Legal References:

RCW 28A.320.127 Plan for recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral stress in students

RCW 28A.410.043 School Counselor Certification

RCW 28A.410.226 Washington professional educators standards board – Training program on youth suicide screening – Certificates for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors.

RCW 28A.410.043 School Counselor Certification

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PROCEDURES

A. Prevention

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but are not limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that (1) enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and each other and (2) is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

1. Student Health Education Program

The District's comprehensive Health Education Program will promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-esteem. Developmentally-appropriate suicide prevention instruction will be a part of the health education curriculum, with the goal of helping students to identify feelings that may lead to self-harm and ways to get support and help.

2. Student Responsibility

The District will encourage students to notify a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing depression, thoughts of suicide, or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's despair or suicidal intentions.

Where appropriate, the District will use students to help educate their peers to identify the warning signs of suicidal behavior and to get a suicidal student adult help.

3. Staff Training

The District's suicide prevention training will help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training will be offered to district counselors, mental health and intervention specialists, nurses, and other designated staff members in cooperation with one or more community mental health or public health agencies and may include information on:

- a. identifying risk factors such as previous suicide attempts, history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, bullying and

- harassment, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors;
- b. warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in a student's appearance, personality, or behavior;
- c. school and community resources/services; and
- d. district procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, discloses the desire to commit suicide, or displays other indicators.

4. Principal/Designee Prevention Planning

School administrative teams will designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted regarding a suicide threat, including the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, superintendent, the student's parent/guardian and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.

The principal or counselor may develop a reentry plan, including a Student Support Plan for use after a suicide threat. The re-entry plan and a Student Support Plan will reside with the school counselor.

B. Intervention

1. Staff Responsibility

Whenever a staff member has knowledge of a student who is at risk of a suicide, he/she will take proper steps to support the student, promptly notify the principal or school counselor, and request the appropriate school staff conduct an initial risk interview.

The principal or counselor will then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible, unless notification of the parents will jeopardize the student's safety. The District may also refer the student to mental health resources in the community.

Additionally, the principal or designee will ensure the student's physical safety and should consider the following:

- a. secure immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
- b. secure emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
- c. keep the student under continuous adult supervision until the parents/guardians and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and have the opportunity to intervene;
- d. document the incident and disposition in writing as soon as feasible;

- e. follow-up with the parents/guardians and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate service agencies as needed;
- f. provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident; or
- g. provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

2. Parent Responsibility

If a student is determined to be at risk of suicide, the principal or designee will contact the parents/guardians unless notification of the parents will jeopardize the student's safety. When contacting the parents/guardians, the principal or designee should follow up by:

- a. asking the parents/guardians whether they are aware of the student's mental state;
- b. asking the parents/guardians how they will obtain mental counseling or appropriate support for the student;
- c. providing names of community counseling resources, if appropriate, and offer to facilitate the referral(s);
- d. determining the parents/guardians' intent to seek appropriate services for the student; and
- e. discussing the student's reentry into school.

C. Post-Event

In the event that a suicide occurs or is attempted, the principal or designee will follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Plan.

After consultation with the Superintendent or designee and the student's parents/guardians about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the principal or designee may provide the student, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed.

School administrators may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students and staff.

Following a suicide, the District will also assess the impact within all schools and the local community and provide appropriate information and support.

D. Communications

The District's self-harm and suicide prevention policy and procedures will be available for all staff, students, and the community on the District's website and in school and district offices.

E. Resources

The District will utilize school counselors, intervention specialists, and community resources as appropriate. Resources shall be included in the Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Plan.