

ARTS ACADEMY ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL
Board Policy

CATEGORY: General
TITLE: Suicide Awareness
ADOPTED: November 16, 2023
REVISED:

POLICY NUMBER: 322

Purpose

The Board is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and the school community. This policy supports the provision of Charter School programs and practices designed to prevent suicide.

Authority

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 Charter School- sponsored vehicle providing transportation to or from a school-sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following 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.

Publication of Policy

The Charter School will notify its school personnel, students and parents/guardians of this policy and will post the policy on the Charter School’s website.

Definitions

At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with evidence of risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Chief School Administrator shall mean the Chief Executive Officer of the Charter School.

Crisis Response Team shall consist of the “Student Services Team” as well as the administrators, school counselors, the school nurse, social worker, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the building principal. (Community agencies and appropriately trained staff (i.e., Counselors, social workers, psychologists) may be utilized in times of crisis)

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.

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.

Protective Factors shall refer to characteristics (psychological and social) that reduce risk and the likelihood of the individual developing a mental illness.

Resilience shall refer to an individual’s ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes.

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.

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.

School Personnel include, but may not be limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicidal Act or **Suicidal 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.

Warning Signs are evidence-based indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention

The Charter School shall establish a crisis response team. The members of the crisis response team are set forth in the definitional section of this policy.

The Charter School shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide awareness and prevention, which includes the following:

Staff Development

The school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding the school's protocols for suicide awareness and prevention. Education will be provided for all school personnel about the importance of suicide prevention and recognition of suicide risk factors, as well as strategies to enhance protective factors, resilience, and school connectedness. Additionally, all school personnel will be educated about the warnings signs and risk factors for youth depression and suicide.

As the current composition of the school is grades K-5, the Commonwealth's requirement of 4 hours of training in youth suicide awareness does not apply to the school staff. In the event that the grade composition of the school is changed to include grades above fifth grade, the requirement for training will be implemented.

Prevention Education for Students

Students shall receive age-appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education or other appropriate curricula on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self and/or others. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. These lessons may be taught by health and physical education teachers, community service providers, classroom teachers or student services staff.

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

1. Information about suicide prevention. Resources are available on at 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.

Intervention/Prevention

Students who are in need of intervention shall be referred in accordance with the school's threat assessment policy.

In compliance with state regulations and in support of the school's suicide prevention methods, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the building principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is at risk.

Any school personnel who suspects a student may be exhibiting risk factors, or warning signs, or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with the Charter School's referral procedures.

The Charter School shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student, if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

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.

If a student is identified as being at-risk for suicide or attempts suicide and requires special education services or accommodations, the Student Services coordinator shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

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 principal or designee. Any threat in any form shall be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone in the school, and the staff may not promise the student that everything said by the student shall be confidential. Instead, the staff will explain to the student that in cases of life-threatening situations, a student's confidentiality will be waived. The Charter School's crisis response procedures shall be implemented.

Procedures for Parental Involvement

Parent/Guardian of a student identified as being at risk of suicide must be immediately notified by the school and must be involved in consequent actions. If any mandated reporter suspects that a student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect or if the parent/guardian refuses to adequately cooperate to ensure the students' safety, that individual must comply with the reporting requirements of the Child Protective Services Law.

Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt on Campus

The first school personnel on the scene of a suicide or suicide attempt must follow the Charter School's crisis response procedures, and shall immediately notify the principal or designee and request 911 support.

The school entity will immediately notify the parents/guardians of the affected student(s).

Resources for Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the

- Department of Education at www.education.pa.gov
- PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative <https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/task-force-county-init/>
- Suicide Prevention Resources Center www.sprc.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org

Reference: 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action

Local Resources for Crisis Assessments

- Foundation Behavioral Health 215-345-7151
- Penn Foundation for Mental Health 215-257-6551
- Lenape Valley Foundation Crisis Line 215-345-2273
- Hospital Emergency Rooms