

Overview of Suicide EOP

Prevention

1. Develop a plan to decrease suicide attempts with actions such as:
 - a. Teach staff to identify safety risk factors and to make an appropriate referral (QPR, Assist)
 - b. Teach students to identify safety risk factors and to refer a friend (Safe Talk, Signs of Suicide)
 - c. Provide parent education about mental health issues and suicide
 - d. Promote healthy behaviors (nutrition, sleep hygiene)
 - e. Provide class or group instruction to give students coping skill tools to manage their emotions and to decrease mental health stigma
 - f. Utilize a program to promote youth help seeking behaviors (such as positively impacting community norms by creating a helping source bulletin board, featuring staff members, etc.)
 - g. Set positive behavior expectations to promote health school environment (MBI)
 - h. Implement bully prevention program
 - i. Implement substance abuse prevention program
 - j. Take action in school to remind students of available resources, such as hotlines (posters, screen savers, announcements)
 - k. Take action out of school to remind students of resources for help through social media (text, email, Facebook)
 - l. Form an incentive program to encourage students place crisis hotline numbers/apps in their cell phones
 - m. Create a threat assessment team to:
 - Screen students for risk
 - Monitor high risk students
 - Provide interventions (counseling support, check-in/check-out, mentor, referrals)
 - Provide 50 accommodations and transition assistance
 - n. Align suicide protocols to follow best practice guidelines to decrease the risk of another crisis
 - o. Collaborate with community mental health service providers (review safety plans to reinforce the implementation of healthy self-care behaviors)
2. Update EOP regularly
3. Update staff, student, and parent contact information
3. Regularly train staff regarding emergency operations plans
4. Prepare appropriate template notices of suicide for students, parents and media
5. Develop tools to assist teachers when speaking with students
6. Create a plan to coordinate EOP with other local schools

Protection

1. Identify alternate location and protocol for students to avoid witnessing a suicide at school
2. Make first aid/CPR kits readily available
3. Form agreements with community resources for counseling support
4. Prepare resources for a Recovery Room to provide grief support or psychological first aid

Mitigation

1. System for quick first aid/CPR response plan if there is a suicide attempt at school
2. Protocol for requesting additional medical care if there is a suicide attempt at school

Created by Steve Zieglowsky

[Bitterroot Valley Education Cooperative](#) School Behavioral Health Specialist

3. Protocol for responding to student suicide threat

Response

1. Create functional annexes for suicide threat in school, suicide attempt in school and suicide completion outside of school

Suicide Threat in the School

In the event a staff member believes a student is a suicide risk or has attempted suicide:

Initial Staff Actions

1. Notify school administrator and the appropriate counseling staff member
2. Inquire about the suspicion or find another adult to do so (do not leave student alone)
3. Demonstrate calm demeanor, but communicate your concern about the student's safety
4. Assure the student you will find help to keep him or her safe
5. Do not let the student convince you the crisis is over
6. Do not take too much upon yourself. Your responsibility is limited to listening, providing support and referring the student to the appropriate counseling staff member

Administrator Actions

1. Call 911 or resource officer if the student needs medical attention, has a weapon, needs to be restrained or a parent or guardian cannot be reached
2. Organize threat assessment team meeting to determine course of school actions/interventions
3. Document the process

Counselor Actions

1. Contact student's parent or guardian to:
 - a. Arrange for the student to leave school with a parent or guardian
 - b. Provide the parent or guardian information about the suicide risk
 - c. Make appropriate referrals and recommendations
2. Check in with the student after the crisis to monitor student for future safety issues
3. Provide appropriate school accommodations

Suicide Attempt in the School

Initial Staff Actions

1. Issue Clear the Room procedure to remove students from the scene
Note: Remain calm and reassure students that everything possible is being done for the student
2. If the student is conscious and has ingested medication, request information about the method
3. Call 911 if the student needs medical attention
4. Notify school administrator
5. Provide first aid/CPR if necessary
6. Stay with the student until assistance arrives
7. When the police or medical personnel have arrived, rejoin your students in the designated Clear the Room area

Counselor Actions

1. Contact student's parent or guardian to inform the parents or guardians
2. Follow Recovery Room Protocol to support affected students

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[Bitterroot Valley Education Cooperative](#) School Behavioral Health Specialist

3. Contact the family to provide support
 - a. Provide the parent or guardian relevant information about the issue of suicide
 - b. Make appropriate referrals and recommendations
4. Check in with the student after the crisis to monitor student for future safety issues
5. Provide appropriate school accommodations

Administrator Actions

1. Call 911 or resource officer if the student needs medical attention, has a weapon, needs to be restrained or a parent or guardian cannot be reached
2. Notify appropriate counseling staff to follow Recovery Room Protocol
3. Notify school staff (teachers, school nurse and support staff)
4. Notify students via classroom statements read by teacher
5. Notify parents via mail
6. Organize threat assessment team meeting to determine course of school actions/interventions (create plan to monitor and support at risk youth in close relationships (phone parents))
7. Document the process
8. Follow district policy for speaking with media

Suicide Completion Outside of School

Initial Staff Actions

1. Notify school administrator

Counselor Actions

1. Follow Recovery Room Protocol to support affected students

Administrator Actions

1. Verify the death
2. Contact the family to provide support
3. Notify appropriate counseling staff to follow Recovery Room Protocol
4. Call tree for staff meeting (teachers, school nurse and support staff) Note: consider substitutes
5. Notify students via classroom statements read by teacher
6. Notify parents via mail
7. Organize threat assessment team meeting to determine course of school actions/interventions (create plan to monitor and support at risk youth in factors to consider relationship with the deceased, mental health issues, changes in attendance, increased conflict, fixation on death, etc.)
8. Document the process
9. End of day staff meeting (gain information, teacher support)
10. Follow district policy for speaking with media
11. Follow district policy and plan for funeral attendance and memorial projects

Recovery

1. Provide grief counseling via recovery room procedure
2. Develop a plan to assist students to return to a regular routine

Recovery Room

Recovery Room Protocol may involve setting up a room to aid students by providing education about grief, conducting counseling activities, assessing student reactions and making referrals for therapy.

1. Drop-in center for all grieving students that is available all day the first day (news of a sudden death may be disseminated in this setting to students with close relationships to the deceased).
2. More than one counselor/facilitator is needed in the group at one time; it's also a good idea to have others available for relief purposes.
3. Co-facilitating is especially critical to maintain continuity, in spite of the "drop-in" process, for consultation in identifying high-risk students and for general support and help.
4. Focus:
 - A. Memories, positive experiences with person who died
 - B. Feelings about loss
 - C. Stages of grieving (grief education)-students may bring up spirituality
 - D. Funeral and services-appropriate behaviors/concerns about experience
 - E. Future-what next?
 - F. Guilt work if needed, some need to focus on causation
 - G. Family and friend's response (Kids often wonder "What can I do? How can I help?")
 - H. Identifying others that the students are concerned about (provides them with an opportunity to help; gives them a purpose in crises; allows them to be part of a larger supportive community response)
5. Avoid focusing on:
 - A. Narcissistic focus on suicidal thoughts, feelings, experiences if the death was a suicide (consider promoting some dis-identification with the student and the deceased)
 - B. Constant talk about the actual death (morbid focusing)
 - C. Blame
6. Bring group to some closure the second day-avoid adding new members (may need to meet others on a one-to-one basis); probably will focus more on funeral and services.
7. May need to reconvene after funeral for an hour to refocus on grief/loss; bring group to some closure again and offer various resources for on-going support.
8. Remember throughout the course of group process, facilitators need to identify students with chronic problems around the issue of suicide/self-destructive behavior (regardless of the cause of the death) and to assess whether these youngsters need to be "pulled" from the group. If the students in question are identified as "chronic manipulative attempters" they must be removed from the group and their on-going counselor/therapist should be contacted.
9. The counseling staff may want to consider the possibility of a "neighborhood group" in the evening to reach youngsters at all age levels (checking in with parents to see if there is a need).

10. Finally, we suggest group work as a possibility for the whole system, K-12. Death impacts the whole educational community, not just one branch.

*Some information contained in this document was created from the American Association of School Counselors (ASCA) Crisisbook