

Youth Suicide Awareness & Prevention Policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all district students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide.

The district: (a) recognizes that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes, (b) further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people, (c) has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide, and (d) acknowledges the school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development.

The Fredericktown R-1 School District has a designated District Crisis Response Team which includes administrators, school counselors, school-based social workers, school nurse, and school resource officers. The District Crisis Response Team is responsible for ensuring that the district policy is reviewed and updated annually, as well as, ensuring all district staff receive annual youth suicide awareness and prevention education. The District Crisis Response Team is also responsible for implementation of the crisis response procedures.

Each building level within the Fredericktown R-1 School District will designate a Building Crisis Response Team which will include building principal, school counselor(s), school-based social worker, school nurse, school resource officer and teacher(s) as appropriate. The Signs of Suicide (SOS), evidenced based/informed tool for assessing suicide risk, will be utilized at each building, when assessing an at-risk student. All crisis response team members will receive training and coaching in using this tool to collect and document student suicidal behaviors and safety planning strategies. In the event of a death or a death by suicide, the District Crisis Team and the affected Building Crisis Team will confer and follow the procedures identified in this policy and the Fredericktown R-1 Crisis Manual, in order to help the school community understand and process the death.

PREVENTION

All Fredericktown R-1 School District employees will receive annual professional development addressing risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The professional development will include additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide, including those living with mental and/ or substance use disorders, those who engage in self harm or have attempted suicide, those in out-of-home settings, those experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native students, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) students, students bereaved by suicide, and those with medical conditions or certain types of disabilities.

Starting no later than fifth grade, students will receive age appropriate information and instruction on suicide awareness and prevention. The school counselors will utilize the evidence-based and researched based program, Signs of Suicide (SOS), to give students a tool for helping self and others. Student education will include:

1. Information about mental health, well-being and suicide prevention and awareness
2. Promotion of a climate that encourages peer referral and which emphasizes school connectedness
3. Recognition of the signs that they or peers are at risk of suicide
4. Identification of issues that may lead to suicide including depression, anxiety, anger, and drug/alcohol dependency
5. Directive to not make promises of confidence when they are concerned about peer suicide
6. Identification of a trusted adult on campus with whom students can discuss concerns about suicide

ASSESSMENT and REFERRAL

This policy outlines key protocols and procedures for the Fredericktown R-1 School District employees in order to assist in the prevention of suicide and to promote student well-being.

Suicidal Response Procedures

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, i.e., verbalizes about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as agitation or intoxication, the act of self-harm occurs, or a student self-refers, the student will be seen by a school counselor or school-based social worker within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no school counselor or school-based social worker available in the school building, a school counselor or social worker from another building within the Fredericktown R-1 school District will be contacted to assess risk and facilitate referral.

Student at risk:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety
2. The school counselor or school-based social worker will utilize the Signs of Suicide (SOS) assessment tool to assess risk
3. The principal will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible
4. The school counselor, school-based social worker, or principal will contact the student's parent/guardian of the at-risk student of suicide and consult with them about the risk assessment of their student, to make them aware of community resources, and to discuss how to best support the student's mental well-being and safety. When appropriate the school counselor and/or school-based social worker will assist the family

with an urgent referral. This may include calling emergency services or bringing the student to the local Hospital/Emergency Department, but in most cases will involve setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider. If school personnel are needed to transport the at-risk student to the local Hospital/Emergency Department, at least two school personnel, including School Resource Officer, are required to assist in transportation. (SEE PARENTAL NOTIFICATION)

5. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate.
6. If the parent refuses to cooperate or if there is any doubt regarding the student's safety, local mental service providers and/or law enforcement may need to be engaged, and a report will be made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.
7. Contact with a parent concerning risk of suicide will be documented in writing.

Student's suicidal behaviors are not confidential and may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, school personnel, or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student is at risk.

Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-school location, the staff member will:

1. Call the police and/or emergency medical services, such as 911.
2. Inform the student's parent or guardian. (SEE PARENTAL NOTIFICATION)
3. Inform the school counselor and principal. If the student contacts the staff member and expresses suicidal ideation, the staff member should maintain contact with the student (either in person, online, or on the phone). The staff member should then enlist the assistance of another person to contact the police while maintaining verbal engagement with the student.
4. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate.

In-School Suicide Attempts

In the case of an in-school suicide attempt, the health and safety of the student is paramount. In these situations:

1. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be received, following district emergency medical procedures.
2. School staff will supervise the student to ensure their safety.
3. Staff will move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
4. The building principal and district superintendent will be immediately notified regarding in-school suicide attempts.

5. If appropriate, staff will immediately request a mental health assessment for the youth.
6. The school counselor, school-based social worker, and/or principal will contact the student's parent or guardian. (SEE PARENTAL NOTIFICATION)
7. The school will engage the crisis team to assess whether additional steps should be taken to ensure student safety and well-being.

Parental Notification

In situations where a student is assessed at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt, the student's parent or guardian will be informed as soon as practicable by the principal, school counselor, and/or school-based social worker. If the student has exhibited any kind of suicidal behavior, the parent or guardian should be counseled on "means restriction," limiting the child's access to mechanisms for carrying out a suicide attempt.

Staff will also seek parental permission to communicate with outside mental health care providers regarding their child. Through discussion with the student, the principal, school counselor, and/or school-based social worker will assess whether there is further risk of harm due to parent or guardian notification. If the principal, school counselor, and/or school-based social worker, in their professional capacity, that contacting the parent or guardian would endanger the health or well-being of the student, they may delay such contact as appropriate. If contact is delayed, the reasons for the delay must be documented.

Re-entry Procedures

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), a school counselor, school-based social worker, or building principal, will meet with the student's parent or guardian, and if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

1. The school counselor or school-based social worker will be identified to coordinate with the student, their parent or guardian, and any outside mental health care providers.
2. The parent or guardian will provide documentation from a mental health care provider that the student has undergone examination and that they are no longer a danger to themselves or others.
3. The school counselor, social-based social worker, and/or building principal will periodically check in with the student to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing concerns.

POSTVENTION

When the school community is impacted by suicidal behavior, a death by suicide, or a death, the district will confer with the District Crisis Team and the directly affected Building Crisis Team to identify and make available supports that may help the school community understand and process the behavior and/or death.

The District Crisis Team along with the Building Crisis Team will utilize the Missouri School Counselor Association Crisis manual along with the Fredericktown R-1 School District's Crisis manual to determine the appropriate procedures for informing the school community of a death or a death by suicide and the supports that will be offered.

PUBLICATION of POLICY

The Fredericktown R-1 School District will notify all employees, students, and parents of this policy by posting the policy and related procedures on the district's website and discussing this policy during professional development training. The District will also include the "Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy" in the students' handbooks starting the academic year of 2018-19.

