

5350 PUPIL SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Board of Education recognizes that depression and self-destruction are problems of increasing severity among pupils. Pupils under severe stress cannot benefit fully from the educational program and may pose a threat to themselves or others.

The Board directs all school district staff members to be alert to a pupil who exhibits warning signs of self-destruction or who threatens or attempts suicide. Any such warning signs or the report of such warning signs from another pupil or staff member shall be taken with the utmost seriousness and reported immediately to the Principal or designee.

The Principal or designee shall immediately contact the parent(s) of the pupil exhibiting warning signs of suicide to inform the parent(s) the pupil will be referred to the Child Study Team or a Suicide Intervention Team, appointed by the Superintendent or designee, for a preliminary assessment. Upon completion of the preliminary assessment, the Principal or designee shall meet with the parent(s) to review the assessment. Based on the preliminary assessment, the parent(s) may be required to obtain medical or psychiatric services for the pupil. In the event the parent objects to the recommendation or indicates an unwillingness to cooperate in the best interests of the pupil, the Principal or designee will contact the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency to request intervention on the pupil's behalf.

In the event the pupil is required to obtain medical or psychiatric services, the parent(s) will be required to submit to the Superintendent a written medical clearance from a licensed medical professional, selected by the parent(s) and approved by the Superintendent, indicating the pupil has received medical services, does not present a risk to themselves or others, and is cleared to return to school. The written medical clearance may be reviewed by a Board of Education healthcare professional before the pupil is permitted to return to school. The parent(s) shall be required to authorize their healthcare professional(s) to release relevant medical information to the school district's healthcare professional, if requested.

Any school district staff member, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a pupil has attempted or completed suicide, shall immediately report the information to the Principal or designee or their immediate supervisor who will immediately report it to the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall promptly report it online to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, or as otherwise required by the Department of Children and Families in accordance with N.J.S.A. 30:9A-24. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 30:9A-24i, any person who reports an attempted or completed suicide shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability on account of the report, unless the person has acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111 and 18A:6-112, as part of the required professional development for teachers as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3 et seq., every teaching staff member must complete at least two hours of instruction in suicide prevention, to be provided by a licensed health care professional with training and experience in mental health issues, in each professional development period. The instruction in suicide prevention shall include information on the relationship between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying and information on reducing the risk of suicide in pupils who are members of communities identified as having members at high risk of suicide.

The Superintendent shall prepare and disseminate guidelines to assist school district staff members in recognizing the warning signs of a pupil who may be contemplating suicide, to respond to a threat or attempted suicide, and to prevent contagion when a pupil commits suicide.

N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111; 18A:6-112

N.J.S.A. 30:9A-23; 30:9A-24

N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3 et seq.

First Reading: September 25, 2018

Adopted: October 30, 2018

R 5350 PUPIL SUICIDE PREVENTION

The following are guidelines to assist school district staff members in recognizing the warning signs of a pupil who may be contemplating suicide, to respond to a threat or attempted suicide, and to prevent contagion when a pupil commits suicide.

A. Recognition of Warning Signs of Suicide

All school district staff members shall be alert to any warning signs a pupil may be contemplating suicide. Such warning signs may include, but are not limited to, a pupil's:

1. Overt suggestion, regardless of its context, that he/she is considering or has considered suicide or has worked out the details of a suicide attempt;
2. Self-mutilation;
3. Obsession with death or afterlife;
4. Possession of a weapon or possession of other means of suicide or obsession with such means;
5. Sense of hopelessness or unrelieved sadness;
6. Lethargy or despondency, or, conversely, a tendency to become more impulsive or aggressive than usual;
7. Drop in academic achievement, slacking off of energy and effort, or inability to focus on studies;
8. Isolation from others by loss of friends, withdrawal from friends, lack of companionship, or family disintegration;
9. Preoccupation with nonexistent physical illness;
10. Loss of weight, appetite, and/or sleep;
11. Substance abuse;

12. Volatile mood swings or sudden changes in personality;
13. Prior suicide attempt(s);
14. Anxiety or eating disorder;
15. Involvement in an unhealthy, destructive, or abusive relationship; and
16. Depression due to being a victim/target of harassment, intimidation, bullying, or mistreatment by others.

B. Response to the Warning Signs of Suicide

1. Any indication of suicide, whether personally witnessed or received by a report from another, shall be taken seriously and immediately reported to the Principal or designee. Upon receiving such report, the Principal will ensure the pupil is supervised by a school staff member until a preliminary assessment of the risk is determined.
2. The Principal or designee shall immediately contact the parent(s) of the pupil exhibiting warning signs of suicide to inform the parent(s) that the pupil will be referred to the Child Study Team or a Suicide Intervention Team for a preliminary assessment in accordance with C. below.
3. If the threat of suicide is immediate and serious, the Principal will contact local law enforcement and the Superintendent of Schools.

C. Preliminary Assessment and Recommendation(s)

1. The Principal or designee will designate the Child Study Team or the Suicide Intervention Team to immediately meet with the pupil to complete a preliminary assessment.
2. The Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team will make a recommendation(s), based on the preliminary assessment, to the Principal or designee regarding the pupil's risk of suicide.

3. Upon receiving the recommendation(s), the Principal or designee will immediately meet with the parent(s) to review the findings of the preliminary assessment. Based on the recommendation(s) of the Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team, the pupil may be:
 - a. Permitted to remain in school:
 - (1) If the pupil remains in school after the preliminary assessment, the Principal or designee will designate a school staff member to follow-up with the pupil on any recommendations of the Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team.
 - b. Referred to the Child Study Team for further evaluation;
 - c. Removed from the school and released to the parent(s) and will be required to obtain medical or psychiatric services before the pupil may return to school:
 - (1) The parent(s) will be required to submit to the Superintendent a written medical clearance from a licensed medical professional selected by the parent(s) and acceptable to the Superintendent, indicating the pupil has received medical services, does not present a risk to himself/herself or others, and is cleared to return to school. The Superintendent will not act unreasonably in withholding approval of the medical professional selected by the parent(s). The written medical clearance may be reviewed by a Board of Education healthcare professional before the pupil is permitted to return to school.
 - (2) The parent(s) shall be required to authorize their healthcare professional(s) to release the pupil's relevant medical information to the school district's healthcare professional, if requested.
 - d. Required to comply with the recommendation(s) outlined in C.3.a., b., and/or c. above, and/or any other recommendation(s) of the Principal or designee to ensure the pupil's safety and the safety of others.
4. In the event the parent(s) objects to the recommendation(s) or indicates an unwillingness to cooperate with the school district regarding their child, the Principal or designee will contact the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency to request intervention on the pupil's behalf.

D. Response to Attempted Suicide by a Pupil

1. Any school district staff member, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe a pupil has attempted suicide, shall immediately report the information to the Principal or designee or their immediate supervisor.
2. A Principal or designee or supervisor who receives a report of a pupil who has attempted suicide will immediately report it to the Superintendent or designee, who shall promptly report it online to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, or as otherwise required by the Department of Children and Families.
3. The school district staff member who witnesses a suicide attempt on school grounds, at a school sponsored event, or on a school bus shall immediately contact local law enforcement and emergency medical services, as appropriate.

E. Response to Suicide Committed by a Pupil

1. Any school district staff member, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe a pupil has committed suicide, shall immediately report the information to the Principal or designee or their immediate supervisor.
2. A Principal or designee or supervisor who receives a report that a pupil has committed suicide will immediately report it to the Superintendent or designee, who shall promptly report it online to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, or as otherwise required by the Department of Children and Families.
3. The Principal of the school the pupil attended will assemble school staff members as soon as possible, to provide school staff members information, plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of pupils.
4. The Principal of the school the pupil attended will use a School Crisis Team to assist school staff members in dealing with any issues that arise due to the situation and to assist pupils in the loss.
5. The School Crisis Team will assist teachers in responding to the needs of pupils. Pupils who were close to the victim shall be offered special counseling services and parents will be notified of available community mental health services.

6. School staff members shall be especially alert to warning signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.
7. All Principals in the school district will be promptly informed when a pupil enrolled in the district commits suicide. The district, with the approval of the Superintendent, may provide support and services to school staff members and pupils as needed.
8. The Principal of the school the pupil attended may, with the approval of the Superintendent, provide any additional support and services that will assist school staff members and pupils in the loss.

F. Prevention of Suicide Contagion

1. School staff members, under the direction of the Principal or designee, shall attempt to prevent suicide contagion by:
 - a. Avoiding the glorification or romanticization of suicide;
 - b. Helping pupils recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems;
 - c. Encouraging pupils to ask questions when a fellow pupil suggests suicide and report to a school staff member;
 - d. Discussing ways of handling depression and anxiety without resorting to self-destruction; and
 - e. Implementing any other strategies to prevent suicide contagion.

In Effect: October 30, 2018