

**819-AG-1. SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE  
Administrative Guidelines**

**Rules and Regulations Interpreting Board Policy of Suicide Awareness,  
Prevention and Response (819)**

*The guidelines contained in the following Administrative Regulation are based on recommendations by the Services for Teens at Risk Center (STAR-Center). As provided, the guidelines are a resource to assist school employees in preventing, intervening and responding to a suicide or suicide attempt. Because the decisions made by school employees in response to such events may require quick decisions to promote the safety of students, staff or the general public, these guidelines are not intended to prevent school employees from taking a course of action that is different from the guidelines.*

**Suicide Threat**

**Suicide Threat** - a verbal or nonverbal communication that the individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior.

When responding to a suicide threat, the district recommends that the staff use the following guidelines if the circumstances warrant such action:

1. The staff member who learns of the threat should locate the individual and arrange for or provide constant adult supervision.
2. The above-mentioned staff member should then inform the principal or his/her designee.
3. The appropriate staff or approved agency provider should determine risk and intervention needed by interviewing the student and gathering appropriate supportive documentation from teachers or others who witnessed the threat.

The principal or his/her designee should:

1. Contact the parent/guardian, apprise him/her of the situation and make recommendations.
2. Provide to parent a copy of pertinent information from the Youth Suicide Risk Assessment form.

3.

Maintain a file copy of the Youth Suicide Risk Assessment Form in a secure and appropriate location.

If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the suicide prevention coordinator should attempt to inform his/her treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.

If the parent/guardian refuses to cooperate and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school employee who directly witnessed the threat should pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling *County Emergency Services at 610-280-3270* and ask for a delegate. The delegate should listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If a 302 involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand witness would need to be the petitioner, with support from the principal or his/her designee.

If the county delegate authorizes a 302 mental health assessment, then the county should authorize transportation to the assessment. If school security/resource officers should transport the student, then one (1) district employee should drive and another should be seated next to the student. Do not drive the student in personal vehicles. Do not leave the student alone at any time. Depending on the level of the student's distress, the 302 petitioner, the employee who learned first hand of the threat, may need to travel in a separate vehicle.

Involve the Student Assistance Program (SAP) team for follow-up and support.

**Note:** If a threat is made during an after-school program and no school or district personnel are available, call 610-280-3270 - *Chester County Crisis Emergency Services* or 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Inform the principal or his/her designee of the incident and actions taken.

### **Suicidal Act or Attempt on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity**

**Suicidal Act** (also referred to as Suicide Attempt) - 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.

When responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, the district recommends that the staff use the following guidelines if the circumstances warrant such action:

The first district employee on the scene should call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911. In addition:

1. A staff member should notify the principal or his/her designee.

2. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
3. The principal or his/her designee should involve Student Services personnel to assist as needed.
4. The principal or his/her designee should contact the parent/guardian and ask him/her to come to the school or hospital.
5. The principal or his/her designee should inform the Superintendent's office.
6. The principal or his/her designee should call for assistance from the district Crisis Management Team or County Crisis Emergency Services at (*insert 24-hour number*).
7. The principal or his/her designee will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.
8. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the principal or his/her designee should attempt to inform his/her treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.
9. The principal or his/her designee should involve the SAP team for follow up and support.
10. The suicide prevention coordinator should request written documentation from any treating facilities prior to a student's return to school.
11. Student Services staff should promptly follow up with any students or staff who might have witnessed the attempt and contact their parents/guardians. Student Services staff should provide supportive counseling and document all actions taken. Guidelines are available in the *STAR-Center's Postvention Standard's Manual*.
12. Media representatives should be referred to the appropriate school spokesperson (e.g., Superintendent or Communications Coordinator). School staff should make no statements to the media.

**Suicide Act or Attempt Not on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity But Reported to a School Employee**

Follow the procedures outlined under Suicide Threat.

**Suicide Completion of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity**

**Suspected Suicide (also referred to as Suicide Completion)** - death from injury, poisoning, or suffocation where there is initial indication evidence that a self-inflicted act may have led to the

person's death. Schools must adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.

When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the principal or his/her designee should confer with the Superintendent and promptly implement crisis response procedures outlined in the district's Crisis Management Plan.

When responding to a suspected suicide, the district recommends that the staff use the following guidelines if the circumstances warrant such action:

1. The first employee on the scene should call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.
2. A staff member should notify the principal or his/her designee.
3. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
4. The principal or his/her designee should involve Student Services personnel to assist as needed.
5. The principal or his/her designee should contact the parent/guardian and ask him/her to come to the school or hospital.
6. The principal or his/her designee should inform the Superintendent's office.
7. The principal or his/her designee should call for assistance from the district Crisis Management Team or County Crisis Emergency Services at (610-280-3270).
8. The principal or his/her designee should document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.

Refer to the *STAR-Center's Postvention Standards Manual* for detailed outline of suicide postvention, procedures to support schools following a sudden death.

The principal or his/her designee should:

1. Immediately notify, regardless of the day or time, the Superintendent's office. They should notify others in the central office.
2. Verify and obtain as much factual information as possible via school police, the parent/guardian, or others who may have the facts depending on circumstances.

3. Assemble your response team using school-based and community resources and the school's service providers that are part of the SAP teams; use the procedures outlined in the Crisis Management Plan if in the evening or over the weekend to ensure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
4. Do not describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents/guardians, staff or students unless you have written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner. Decisions about whether to share the coroner's findings should be made in accordance with the guidelines outlined in *STAR-Center's Postvention Standards Manual*.
5. Promptly collect and safeguard the student's belongings from desk or locker, any student work or photo or staff belongings from his/her desk, in the event of a staff death. Consult with family members and determine a mutually agreeable date and time in private to return these belongings.
6. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred using written communication if school has already begun, followed by a staff meeting at the conclusion of the day. If the death occurred in the evening, convene a staff meeting prior to the start of school the next day. Outline procedures that should be followed per the Crisis Management Plan. Ascertain need for outside agency assistance (i.e. *STAR*).
7. Designate space for all postvention activities.
8. Once obtained, provide funeral arrangements and related details to students, staff via main office, and parents/guardians via written communication.
9. Refer staff to district's EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for additional support.
10. Prepare and send parental information letter home with students following the district's protocol and guidelines in the *STAR-Center's Postvention Standards Manual*.
11. Prioritize classrooms and students who should need immediate attention and connect them with the response team or other appropriate resources as determined by Student Services staff.
12. Refer media requests to district spokesperson.
13. Do not disclose any information or details to the media.
14. Meet with the response team at the end of the day or days during crisis management activities to ensure the exchange of important information, as well as to ensure communication and further planning of activities.
15. Check in periodically with the family, staff and students to ensure that everyone is supported as much as feasible within the context of the school setting.

16. Thank those who assisted in the postvention. *Do not forget to include the faculty, ancillary staff, crisis team and any outside agency or community folks.*

### **Actions to Avoid**

Do not ever announce the death of anyone over the public address system.

Do not hold an assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss suicide.

Avoid canceling school, classes or pre-planned activities unless absolutely necessary; students find comfort in following their normal routine when they are under stress, within reason. Discuss with Superintendent or designee prior to proceeding with any cancellations.

### **Memorials**

It is recognized that grieving individuals need a variety of opportunities to personally express their emotions and reactions to this type of death. Recommendations and ideas for a memorial should be taken into consideration and discussed with the Office of the principal and the response team prior to being implemented. Memorials must be carefully and tastefully planned, considering a broad range of responses. A variety of activities may in fact occur to celebrate positive remembrances, and these expressions often vary. Refer to the *STAR-Center's Postvention Standards Manual*, for additional considerations regarding memorials, graduation activities and anniversary dates.

**Suicide Prevention Designee**

As outlined in policy 819 and 819-AG-1, the school district, as well as each school building should designate a staff person to be the contact for suicide awareness and prevention activities as well as respond to suicide threats or acts, and suicide completions.

The following table lists the designated staff members.

Location	Staff Position	Alternative, if the other is unavailable
District	Assistant Principal at the High School	Assistant Principal at the High School
UHS	School Social Worker	School Counselor
CFPMS	School Social Worker	School Counselor
CFES	School Counselor	School Social Worker
HES	School Counselor	School Social Worker
PES	School Counselor	School Social Worker
UES	School Counselor	School Social Worker