

York Adams Academy

Title: Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response

Number: 819

Status: Active

Legal

24 P.S. 1526

22 PA Code 12.12

Pol. 103.1

Pol. 113.2

Pol. 249

Purpose

The Joint Board of Directors (“Board”) of the York Adams Academy (“Academy”) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and Academy community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to promote behavioral health; provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, comprehensive intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.

Authority

In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of the Academy’s suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents/guardians, the Superintendent of Record or designee or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

Definitions

Behavioral health – the promotion of emotional health; the prevention of mental illnesses and substance use disorders; and treatment and services for substance abuse, addiction, substance use disorders, mental illnesses and/or mental disorders.

Behavioral health service providers – may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community behavioral health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and primary care providers.

Risk Factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:

- Depression.
- Substance abuse or dependence.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Self injury.

Personal Characteristics:

- Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
- Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
- Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
- Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.

Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:

- Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
- Disciplinary or legal problems.
- Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
- School or work issues.
- Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
- Exposure to peer suicide.

Family Characteristics:

- Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
- Family mental health problems.
- Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
- Parental-Child relationship.

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Statements of suicidal intent or ideation.

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

Guidelines

The Academy shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

The Academy shall notify Academy employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the Academy's website.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Lessons shall also inform students about broader behavioral health issues and encourage students to seek help for themselves or their peers.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All Academy employees, including but not limited to administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, coaches, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide awareness and prevention.

As part of the Academy's professional development plan, professional educators shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Additional professional development in suicide risk screening and/or assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to guidance counselors, Academy mental health professionals, school nurses, and other appropriate staff.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

The Academy may provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION

The methods of prevention utilized by the Academy include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts as discussed below.

Suicide Prevention Coordinators

Academy-Wide –

An Academy-wide suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Superintendent of Record. This may be an existing Academy employee. The Academy suicide prevention coordinator shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy.

Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the Academy's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, Academy employees, students and parents/guardians shall be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

Referral Procedures

Any Academy employee who has observed a student exhibiting (1) one or more risk factors or warning signs, or who otherwise reasonably suspects that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with Academy procedures immediately.

Documentation

The Academy shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION

The methods of intervention utilized by the Academy include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts, and completed suicide, in and outside of school. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or behavioral health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

An Academy-approved suicide risk screening or assessment instrument may be used by trained behavioral health staff such as counselors, psychologists, social workers.

Parents/Guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by the Academy and informed of crisis and community resources. If the Academy suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, Academy staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.

The Academy shall identify behavioral health service providers to whom students can be referred for further suicide risk screening and/or assessment and assistance.

The Academy shall create a new, or update a previous emotional or behavioral health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide. The safety plan should be developed collaboratively with input from the student and family.

Students With Disabilities

For students with disabilities who attend the Academy, who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and 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 the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Director shall notify the Director of Special Education at the sending district in order for him or her to take action to address the student's needs in accordance with the sending district's applicable law, regulations, and Board policy.

Documentation

The Academy shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and suicide risk screening and/or assessment and follow-up process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians, teachers, Academy staff, and behavioral health and other service providers.

The Superintendent of Record or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

METHODS OF RESPONSE TO A COMPLETED SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT

The Academy shall maintain a trained school crisis response/crisis intervention team consisting of appropriate professionals as designated by the Academy.

The methods of response to a completed suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by the Academy include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying a trained school crisis response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.
3. Notifying students, employees and parents/guardians.
4. Working with families.
5. Responding appropriately to the media.
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The Superintendent of Record or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a completed suicide or suicide attempt on Academy grounds or during an Academy-sponsored event.

Re-Entry Procedures

A student's excusal from attendance after a behavioral health crisis and the student's return shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.

A behavioral health professional, and either the Director or suicide prevention coordinator, shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to school after a behavioral health crisis, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to school.

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated Academy employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside behavioral health care providers, request documentation from the treating facility, and encourage their involvement in the re-entry meeting.

The designated Academy employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to monitor student progress, facilitate the transition back into the school community, and address any concerns.

Response to Suicide (Postvention)

Upon confirmation of a suicide death, the Academy shall immediately implement established postvention procedures which shall include methods for informing the school community; identifying and monitoring at risk youth; and providing resources and supports for students, staff and families. The Academy will review any requests for memorials in accordance with Academy procedures.

REPORT PROCEDURES

Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians and behavioral health service providers.

When an Academy employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.

As stated in this policy, Academy employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.

The Academy suicide prevention coordinator shall provide the Superintendent of Record with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding each at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to guidance counselors, Academy behavioral health professionals and school nurses.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES

National:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Crisis Text Line: TEXT 741-741 or visit <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>

Pennsylvania:

- [List of Crisis Intervention contact information by county](#)
- [List of County CASSP and Children's Behavioral Health Contact Persons](#)
- [County Task Force Resources](#): By county, available contact information is provided for crisis, the Suicide Prevention Task Force, local chapter of AFSP, and other local mental health/suicide prevention resources

National and State Organizations

National:

- American Association of Suicidology (AAS): <http://www.suicidology.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP): <https://www.afsp.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC): <http://www.sprc.org/>

Pennsylvania:

- Prevent Suicide PA: <http://www.preventsuicidepa.org/>
- Jana Marie Foundation: <http://www.janamariefoundation.org/>
- Aavidum: <http://aavidum.com/cms/>
- Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center)
<https://www.starcenter.pitt.edu/STAR-Center-Home/1/Default.aspx>
- Pennsylvania Department of Education www.education.state.pa.us