

Young Scholars of Greater Allegheny Charter School  
Board Policy

**Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Response**

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

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

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

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

**Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education**

- 1) Protocols for Administration of Student Education
  - a. 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.
  - b. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral, and social skills development.
- 2) Protocols for Administration of Employee Education
  - a. All school employees, including but not limited to secretaries, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.
  - b. As part of the district’s professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through eight (8) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.
  - c. Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to guidance counselors, school mental health professionals and school nurses.
- 3) Resources for Parents/Guardians
  - a. The school 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/mental health resources.

**Methods of Prevention**

The methods of prevention utilized by the school 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.

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1. Suicide Prevention Coordinators

1. School Wide

The CEO/Principal shall designate a school-wide suicide prevention coordinator (the School Counselor). This may be an existing school employee. The school suicide prevention coordinator shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy.

2. 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 district's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, school employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

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

- a. Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
  - Depression
  - Substance abuse or dependence
  - Previous suicide attempts
  - Self-injury
- b. Personal Characteristics:
  - Hopelessness / Low self-esteem
  - Loneliness / Social alienation / Isolation / Lack of belonging
  - Poor problem-solving or coping skills
  - Impulsivity / Risk-taking / Recklessness
- c. 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
- d. Family Characteristics:
  - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior
  - Family mental health problems
  - Divorce / Death of parent/guardian
  - Parent-Child relationship

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

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

3. Referral Procedures

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Any school employee who has identified a student with one (1) or more risk factors or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention.

4. Documentation

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

1) Procedures for Students at Risk

- a. Trained mental health staff such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers may use a district-approved suicide assessment instrument.
- b. The school shall notify Parents/guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide. If the school suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, school staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.
- c. The school shall identify mental health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance.

2) Students with Disabilities

- a. For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations, and Board policy.
- b. 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 of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations, and Board policy.

3) Documentation

- a. The school shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communication with students, parents/guardians, and mental service providers.
- b. The CEO/Principal or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

**Methods of Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt**

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

1. Identifying and training the 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

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5. Responding appropriately to the media
6. Collaborating with community providers

The CEO/Principal or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event.

**Re-Entry Procedures**

1. A student's excusal from school attendance after a mental health crisis and the student's return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.
2. A district-employed mental health professional, the building principal or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to school after a mental health crisis, and, if applicable, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to school.
3. When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated school employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.
4. The designated school employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into the school community and address any concerns.

**Report Procedures**

1. Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians, and mental health service providers.
2. When a school 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.
3. As stated in this policy, school employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention, and response.
4. The suicide prevention coordinator shall provide the CEO/Principal with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to school counselors, school mental health professionals and school nurses.

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**Suicide Awareness and Prevention Resources**

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention shall be attached to this policy.

***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
- [Safe2Say](#) 1-844-SAF2SAY

**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](http://www.education.state.pa.us)

**CRISIS RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

The guidelines below are to assist administrators in implementing appropriate responses to the death of a student or staff member, serious accident, or significant event. All administrators who are notified that a student/staff member has died will immediately:

- Notify the Principal/CEO. The CEO's office will notify the appropriate School Board members.
- Contact the deceased's family to offer condolences, inquire what the school can do to assist, discuss what students should be told, and inquire about funeral arrangements.

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- Call an immediate meeting of the Crisis Response Team or SAP to assign responsibilities.
- If possible, arrange for available staff from other schools to be on hand in the building (in case teachers need to take time out of their classrooms).

The Crisis Response Team shall be composed of the school counselor and the school's principal, school social worker, and nurse.

**TO THE EXTENT THAT ANYTHING IN THIS POLICY COULD BE CONSTRUED TO CONFLICT WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS, THE APPLICABLE STATE AND/OR FEDERAL LAWS CONTROL. THIS POLICY IS NOT INTENDED TO CONFLICT WITH CHARTER REQUIREMENTS.**

ADOPTED on this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023

\_\_\_\_\_  
President  
  
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