

## SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

### **Purpose**

Suicide is a leading cause of death among youths in Missouri and is a public health concern impacting all Missouri citizens. The Steelville R-III School District is committed to maintaining a safe environment to protect the health, safety and welfare of students.

This policy will outline key protocols and procedures the district will use to educate employees and students on the resources and actions necessary to promote suicide awareness and prevent suicide. The goal of the district is to help students who may be at risk of suicide without stigmatizing or excluding students from school. No student will be excluded from school based solely on the district's belief that the student is at risk of suicide.

### **Definitions**

*Crisis Response Team (CRT)* – A team of district employees trained in suicide awareness and prevention.

*Student at Risk of Suicide* – A student who is demonstrating individual, relationship, community or societal factors that are associated with suicide and that in combination indicate that an individual might be contemplating suicide.

*Suicide Crisis* – A situation in which a person is attempting to kill him- or herself or is seriously contemplating or planning suicide. Planning may include, but is not limited to, a timeframe and method for attempting suicide or obtaining or attempting to obtain the means to attempt suicide. A suicide crisis is considered a medical emergency requiring immediate intervention.

### **Crisis Response Team**

The district will establish a district-level CRT and, if practical, a team in each building. CRT members will include administrators, counselors and the school nurse and may also include school social workers, school resource officers, teachers and community members as appropriate. The CRT will be responsible for implementation of the district's response plan.

The district will use an evidence-based/informed tool for determining whether a student is at risk of suicide or is having a suicide crisis. The CRT members, the building administrator and a designee will receive training and coaching in using this tool to assist in making these determinations and appropriately responding.

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### **Response Plan**

District employees will respond immediately in situations where they have a reasonable belief that a student may be at risk of suicide or may be having a suicide crisis.

#### ***Students Who May Be at Risk of Suicide***

Any district employee who has a reasonable belief that a student may be at risk of suicide, even though the student is not having a suicide crisis as defined in this policy, will take the following steps:

1. Make every effort to locate the student immediately, and do not leave the student alone.
2. Notify a CRT member or the building administrator or designee. If the employee cannot reach the building administrator, designee or any of the CRT members, the employee will contact the student's parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian is also unavailable, or at the parent's/guardian's request, the employee will contact emergency services.

When a CRT member or the building administrator or designee receives notification that a student may be at risk of suicide, he or she will take the following steps:

1. If the student cannot be located or leaves after being located, a CRT member or the building administrator or designee will contact the parent/guardian to explain the district's concern.
2. If the student has been located, a CRT member or the building administrator or designee will use an evidence-based/informed tool to determine whether the student is at risk of suicide and the appropriate response. Regardless of the determination, the building administrator or designee will contact the student's parent/guardian to discuss the concern.
3. If it is determined that the student may be at risk of suicide, a school counselor and a CRT member will meet with the student and his or her parents/guardians to discuss support and safety systems, available resources, coping skills and collaborative ways to support the student.

#### ***Students Who May Be Having a Suicide Crisis***

If an employee reasonably believes that a student is having a suicide crisis, the employee will take the following steps:

1. Make every effort to locate the student immediately, and do not leave the student alone.

2. Immediately report the situation to a CRT member or the building administrator or designee. If the employee cannot reach the building administrator, designee or any of the CRT members, the employee will notify the student's parent/guardian and contact emergency services. The employee may also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) for assistance. As soon as practical, the employee will notify the building administrator or designee.

When a CRT member or the building administrator or designee receives notification that a student is believed to be having a suicide crisis, he or she will take the following steps:

1. If the student cannot be located or leaves after being located, a CRT member or the building administrator or designee will contact the parent/guardian to explain the district's concern.
2. If the student has been located, the CRT member or the building administrator or designee will, based on his or her training and an assessment of the student, determine the appropriate action, including whether to call emergency services, and implement the appropriate response.
3. At an appropriate time after the crisis has passed, a school counselor and a CRT member will meet with the student and his or her parents/guardians to discuss support and safety systems, available resources, coping skills and collaborative ways to support the student.

### **Confidentiality**

Employees are required to share with the CRT and administrators or their designees any information that may be relevant in determining whether a student is at risk of suicide, is having a suicide crisis or is otherwise at risk of harm. Employees are prohibited from promising students that information shared by the student will be kept secret when the information is relevant to the student's safety or the safety of another person.

Release of a student's individually identifiable education records will be made in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). In accordance with FERPA, information contained in a student's education records may be revealed at any time to the student's parents/guardians and school personnel who have a legitimate interest in the information. Education records may be shared with other appropriate persons when necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or others.

### **Abuse and Neglect**

If any employee of the district has reasonable cause to believe a student has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes the student being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would

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reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the employee will contact the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline in accordance with law and Board policy.

### **Accommodating a Disability**

If at any time a parent/guardian informs the district that a student has a medical condition or impairment that could require accommodation, district employees will contact the district's compliance coordinator to determine whether the student has a disability.

### **School and Community Resources**

The district will, in collaboration with local organizations and the Missouri Department of Mental Health, identify local, state and national resources and organizations that can provide information or support to students and families. Copies of or links to resources will be available to all students and families on the district's website and in all district schools.

A school counselor or a CRT member will periodically follow up with students and parents/guardians of students who have been identified as being at risk of suicide or who have had a suicide crisis to offer additional assistance.

### **Response to Incidents Impacting the School**

When the school community is impacted by the attempted suicide or death by suicide of a student, staff member or other person in the school community, the superintendent or designee will confer with the district-level CRT and, when appropriate, confer with local community resources and professionals to identify and make available supports that may help the school community understand and process the behavior or death.

The CRT and the superintendent or designee will determine appropriate procedures for informing the school community of an attempted suicide or death by suicide and the supports that will be offered. Staff and students who need immediate attention following an attempted suicide or death by suicide will be provided support and resources available through the district and will be given information about other resources.

### **Staff Education on Suicide Prevention and Response Protocol**

All district employees will receive information regarding this policy and the district's protocol for suicide awareness, prevention and response. This information will be provided to current employees and each new employee hired. The information will focus on the importance of suicide prevention, recognition of suicide risk factors, strategies to strengthen school connectedness, and response procedures.

The district will also provide opportunities for district staff to participate in professional development regarding suicide awareness and prevention. Opportunities may include district-led training, access to web-based training, or training provided in other school districts or by local organizations or health professionals.

### **Suicide Prevention Education for Students**

Starting no later than fifth grade, students will receive age-appropriate information and instruction on suicide awareness and prevention. Information and instruction may be offered in health education, by the counseling staff or in other curricula as may be appropriate.

### **Policy Publication**

The district will notify employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy by posting this policy on the district's website and providing information about the policy to district employees. The district may also include information about the policy in appropriate district publications and student handbooks.

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***Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.***

Adopted: 05/17/2018

Cross Refs: EBCA, Crisis Intervention Plan

Legal Refs: § 170.048, RSMo.

Steelville R-III School District, Steelville, Missouri