

<u>Section:</u> Students	Knox County Board of Education Policy			
	Student Suicide Prevention	Descriptor Term:	Descriptor Code:	Issued:
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SUICIDE STUDENT PREVENTION POLICY

Knox County Schools is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all students and understands that physical, behavioral, and emotional health are integral components of student achievement. Faculty and staff are expected to be proactive in maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment and to immediately report to the building principal any indications that a student may be in danger of harming himself/herself or others. Students are strongly encouraged to report if they, or another student, are feeling suicidal or in need of help. A summary of available resources shall be annually updated and posted for students in a high-traffic area in each school, and on the KCS website.

PREVENTION

All district employees shall attend an annual 2-hour in-service training in suicide prevention. The training shall include, but is not limited to, the identification of risk factors, warning signs, interventions and response procedures, referrals, and postvention strategies.^{1,2}

If a middle or high school uses student identification cards, the card shall indicate the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline; and the social media handle, telephone number, or text number for at least one (1) additional crisis resource, which may include, but not be limited to, the crisis text line or, if available, a local suicide prevention hotline. The same information shall be conspicuously placed in all middle and high schools regardless of the use of student identification cards.¹

The Director of School Culture is responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of this policy. Each school principal shall designate a school suicide prevention coordinator to act as a point of contact for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. The Director of School Culture shall maintain a list of suicide prevention coordinators including the name of each school and assigned coordinators throughout Knox County Schools. This list shall be updated at least annually.

INTERVENTION

Any employee who reasonably believes that a student is at imminent risk of suicide shall report such belief to the principal or designee. Indications that a student is at imminent risk of suicide shall include, but not be limited to, the student verbalizing the desire to die by suicide, evidence of a suicide attempt, and/or an act of self-harm. A student may also complete a student self-referral if he or she feels at risk of suicide. A student should report to a staff member if they believe another student is at imminent risk of suicide. This report should be investigated by staff in person, by phone or virtually.

In Person

1. Upon notification, the principal or designee shall ensure the student is placed under continuous adult supervision.
2. A Suicide Assessment will be completed by a school counselor, school psychologist or social worker designated by the school's principal or designee.
3. Emergency medical services shall be contacted immediately if an in-school suicide attempt occurs.
4. The principal or designee shall contact the Director of School Culture if additional support is required.

Prior to contacting the student's parent/legal guardian, the Director of Schools or his/her designee shall determine if there could be further risk of harm resulting from parent/legal guardian notification. If parent/legal guardian notification could result in further risk of harm or endanger the health or well-being of the student, then local law enforcement and the Department of Children's Services shall be contacted.

Virtually

Upon notification, the principal or designee shall attempt to contact the student's parent or legal guardian. A Suicide Assessment will be completed by a school counselor, school psychologist or social worker designated by the school's principal or designee in person, by phone or virtually. If the threat is thought to be imminent and a parent or legal guardian is not present with the student, emergency services will be sent to the student's home. The school staff member should attempt to stay in contact with the student until emergency services arrive. If the student's parent or legal guardian is at home, they will be instructed to provide continuous supervision of the student and seek medical attention for the student immediately. The principal or designee shall contact the Director of School Culture if additional support is required.

If appropriate, the principal or designee shall contact the student's parent/legal guardian and provide the following information:

1. Inform the parent/legal guardian that there is reason to believe the student is at risk of suicide;
2. Inform the parent/legal guardian if emergency services were contacted;
3. Inform the parent/legal guardian of the results of the Suicide Assessment.
4. Ask the parent/legal guardian whether he/she wishes to obtain or has obtained mental health counseling for the student;
5. Provide the names of community mental health counseling resources if appropriate.

The Director of Schools or designee will seek parental permission to communicate with outside mental health care providers regarding a student. If the student is under the age of 16 and the parent/legal guardian refuses to seek appropriate assistance, the Director of Schools or designee shall contact the Department of Children's Services. If the student is 16 years of age or over and refuses to seek appropriate assistance, the Director of Schools or designee shall contact the Department of Children's Services.³

The principal or designee shall document the incident, including contact with the parent/legal guardian, by recording:

1. The time, date and circumstances which resulted in the student coming to the attention of school officials;
2. A timeline of the specific actions taken by school officials;
3. The parent/legal guardian contacted, including attempts;

- 4. The parent/legal guardian’s response; and
- 5. Time and date of release of student to authorized individual.
- 6. Anticipated follow-up and safety plan. (Schedule safety plan review date as appropriate.)

Upon returning to school, the principal and school counselor and/or school psychologist shall meet with the student and his/her parent or legal guardian in order to develop a safety plan. A school support team shall convene to determine if additional evaluation and/or supports are needed. The principal will identify an employee to periodically connect with the student to monitor his/her safety and address any problems or concerns with re-entry.

ASSESSMENT AND CARE TEAM

Knox County Schools is committed to maintaining campuses and workplace environments that are safe and secure for all students, staff, faculty, and visitors. As part of this commitment, Knox County Schools has established an Assessment and Care Team (“AaCT”), which is empowered to support school staff in assessing risk and, in cooperation with other agencies as appropriate, formulate an appropriate response in situations where an individual’s behavior and/or statements indicate they may present a threat to the health or safety of themselves or of others. The AaCT seeks to mitigate potential risks before they result in harm.

The AaCT consists of school administrative and counseling or school psychologist staff, along with any other staff who are assigned by the Executive Director of Student Supports and Director of School Culture.

POSTVENTION

Immediately following a student suicide death, the school or district crisis team shall meet and develop a postvention plan. At a minimum, the postvention plan shall address the following:

- 1. Verification of death;
- 2. Preparation of school and/or district response, including support services;
- 3. Informing faculty and staff of a student death;
- 4. Informing students that a death has occurred;
- 5. Providing counselors to support students, faculty and staff at the school; and
- 6. Providing information on the resources available to students, faculty and staff.

The crisis team shall work with teachers to identify the students most likely to be impacted by the death in order to provide additional assistance and counseling if needed. Additionally, staff and faculty will review suicide warning signs and reporting requirements.

Legal References:

- 1. T.C.A. § 49-6-1901 et seq.
- 2. T.C.A. § 49-6-3004(c) (1).
- 3. T.C.A. § 33-8-202.

Approved as to Legal Form
 By Knox County Law Director 1/2/2024
 /Gary T. Dupler/Deputy Law Director