

Operation Policy #935
Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy

Purpose:

SusQ-Cyber Charter School adopts this policy in acknowledgment of the school's commitment to maintaining a safe school environment; to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students; to promote healthy development; and to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth. The impact of students' mental health on their academic performance and the effect of mental health issues and suicide on students and the entire school community are significant. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and welfare of students, SusQ-Cyber Charter School will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources necessary to prevent suicide and promote mental well being.

Authority:

This policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from the school or school sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following a student's suicide threat or attempt that does not occur on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel.

Publication:

SusQ-Cyber Charter School will notify its school personnel, students and parents/guardians of this policy and will post the policy on the school's website.

Definitions:

At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Chief School Administrator shall mean the chief executive officer of the cyber charter school.

Crisis Response Team shall include, but many not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the chief executive officer/SusQ-Cyber Charter School.

Expressed Suicidal Thoughts or Intentions shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die, but has not acted on the behavior.

Prevention refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.

Protective Factors shall refer to characteristics (biological, psychological, and social) that reduce risk and the likelihood of the individual developing a mental illness.

Resilience shall refer to an individual's innate ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes.

Risk Factors shall mean the personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide. People affected by one or more of these risk factors have a greater probability of suicidal behavior.

School Connectedness shall mean the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

School Personnel include, but may not be limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicidal Act or Suicide Attempt shall mean 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.

Warning Signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention:

SusQ-Cyber Charter School shall establish a crisis response team. The crisis response team may include, but is not limited to, administrators, guidance counselor, the school nurse, and/or teachers and other members of the school's Student Assistance Program team.

The crisis response team should also include individuals designated as coordinators and/or investigators on cases involving peer-to-peer harassment, as required under federal law. These individuals will help identify overlapping risk factors, including hostile environments created by persistent or severe harassment on the basis of gender, race, disability, or other protected classes.¹

SusQ-Cyber Charter School shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide awareness and prevention, which includes the following:

¹ Please see U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), guidance related to disability discrimination and sex discrimination for more information. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html>.

Staff Development

All school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff shall receive information regarding the school's protocols for suicide awareness and prevention. Education will be provided for all school personnel about the importance of suicide prevention and recognition of suicide risk factors, as well as strategies to enhance protective factors, resilience, and school connectedness. Additionally, all school personnel will be educated about the warning signs and risk factors for youth depression and suicide.

As part of the school's Professional Development Plan, professional staff will participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Intervention/Prevention

In compliance with state regulations and in support of the school's suicide prevention methods, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents or guardians, the building principal or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is at risk.

Any school personnel who has identified a student with one or more risk factors, or warning signs, or who has an indication that student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with SusQ-Cyber Charter School's referral procedures.

If a student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide the student will be referred to the Student Assistance Program (SAP) and those procedures will be followed to provide emotional or mental health safety to support the student and the student's family.

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.

If a student is identified as being at-risk for suicide or attempts suicide and requires special education services or accommodations, the CEO shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

Any school personnel who are made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm that is written, drawn, spoken, or threatened shall immediately notify the principal or designee.

If an expressed suicide thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during an afterschool program and the principal or designee are not available, call 911, 1-800-SUICIDE, or 1-800-273-TALK for help. Thereafter, immediately inform the principal of the incident an actions taken.

Procedures for Parental Involvement

Parent or guardian of a student identified as being at risk of suicide must be immediately notified by the school and must be involved in consequent actions. If any mandated reporter suspects that a student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, that individual must comply with the reporting requirements of the Child Protective Services Law.

If the parent or guardian refuse to cooperate and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school personnel who directly witnessed the expressed suicide thought or intention will pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling 911, County Emergency Services and ask for a delegate. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If a 302 involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first –hand witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from the principal or other central office administrator.

Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt on Campus

The first school personnel on the scene of a a suicide or suicide attempt must follow the school entity's crisis response procedures, and shall immediately notify the principal or designee.

SusQ-Cyber Charter School will immediately notify the parents or guardians of the affected student(s).

Resources for Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the Department at www.education.pa.gov

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative – <http://payspi.org/>

Oct. 2014 Dear Colleague Letter related to peer harassment of students with disabilities:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/publications.html#Section504>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center – <http://www.sprc.org/>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – <http://www.afsp.org/>

Reference:

2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action

