

**SUICIDE**

**AWARENESS**

**AND**

**PREVENTION PLAN**

**Westwood Unified School District**

**Board Approval Date: June 28, 2017**

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# **Board Policy**

## **Suicide Prevention**

BP 5141.52

### **Students**

The Board of Trustees recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent/Principal or designee shall develop preventive strategies and intervention procedures.

The Superintendent/Principal or designee may involve school health professionals, school counselors, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies and professionals, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the district's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)

(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)

### **Prevention and Instruction**

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)

(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)

(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)

The district's comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-esteem. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum in the secondary grades. Such instruction shall be aligned with state content standards and shall be designed to help students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

The Superintendent/Principal or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

### **Staff Development**

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be designed to help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training shall be offered under the direction of a district counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior

3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health

4. School and community resources and services

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

5. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)

#### Intervention

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the Superintendent/Principal or school counselor. The Superintendent/Principal or counselor shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible and may refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community.

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, Superintendent/Principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall complete the suicide prevention curriculum, including identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)

The Superintendent/Principal or designee shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications in the event that a suicide occurs or an attempt is made on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

32280-32289 Comprehensive safety plan

41533 Professional Development Block Grant, suicide prevention training for teachers

49060-49079 Student records

49602 Confidentiality of student information

49604 Suicide prevention training for school counselors

GOVERNMENT CODE

810-996.6 Government Claims Act

WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE

5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent

5850-5883 Mental Health Services Act

COURT DECISIONS

Corales v. Bennett (Ontario-Montclair School District), (2009) 567 F.3d 554

Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008

Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools, 2005

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH PUBLICATIONS

California Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention: Every Californian is Part of the Solution, 2008

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS

School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001

WEB SITES

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>

California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>

California Department of Mental Health, Children and Youth Programs:

[http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services\\_and\\_Programs/Children\\_and\\_Youth](http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services_and_Programs/Children_and_Youth)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>

National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

Policy WESTWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
adopted: September 16, 2009 Westwood, California

Youth

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>

National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

Policy WESTWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
adopted: September 16, 2009 Westwood, California

# **Administrative Regulation**

## **Suicide Prevention**

AR 5141.52

### **Students**

#### **Instruction**

At appropriate secondary grades, the district's suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills
3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent
4. Identify trusted adults, school resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention services

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

#### **Intervention**

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Superintendent/Principal or designee shall:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
  - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred
  - b. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
  - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

2. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, including the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, Superintendent/Principal, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as

necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies

3. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

4. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed

5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at the school

6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions

In the event that a suicide occurs or is attempted on campus, the Superintendent/Principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the school safety plan. After consultation with the Superintendent/Principal or designee and the student's parents/guardians about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Superintendent/Principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 1112- Media Relations)

Regulation WESTWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
approved: September 16, 2009 Westwood, California



# PREVENTION

Westwood Unified School District recognizes that prevention of youth suicide, violence, and substance abuse and the early identification and treatment of mental health disorders are most effective when students, staff, parents, and community members have access to prevention information and resources.

## **SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING FOR STAFF SHALL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor loss, family instability, and other factors
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior
  - Youth bereaved by suicide
  - Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse
  - Homeless youth
  - LGBTQ youth
  - Youth in the juvenile justice or welfare system
  - Native American youth
  - Youth on the fringes of mainstream social groups
3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health
4. School and community resources and services
5. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide

A training will be provided annually for all teachers and staff:

Keenan Link: [www.keenan.safeschools.com](http://www.keenan.safeschools.com) – Youth Suicide: Awareness and Prevention

More information on evidence-based programs and practices can be found in [SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices](#).

The Trevor Project can be found at: [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

# Intervention

The following process should be followed when a staff member becomes aware that a student is experiencing a crisis that may involve risk of harm to self or others:

- When a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the Superintendent, Principal, or designee, who shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible. The student may be referred to mental health resources in the school or community.
- Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

## IMMINENT RISK

- There is immediate danger to the student's self or others (for example, possible presence of a weapon or other means the student intends to use to harm self or others).
- There is a suicide attempt in progress (for example, the student has taken a drug or medication overdose).

The staff member who suspects or has knowledge of imminent risk will do the following:

- Provide for continuous supervision of the student at risk until an emergency responder arrives, keeping personal safety in mind. Evaluate the environment for safety and remove access to methods or lethal means.
- Notify the administrator or designee.

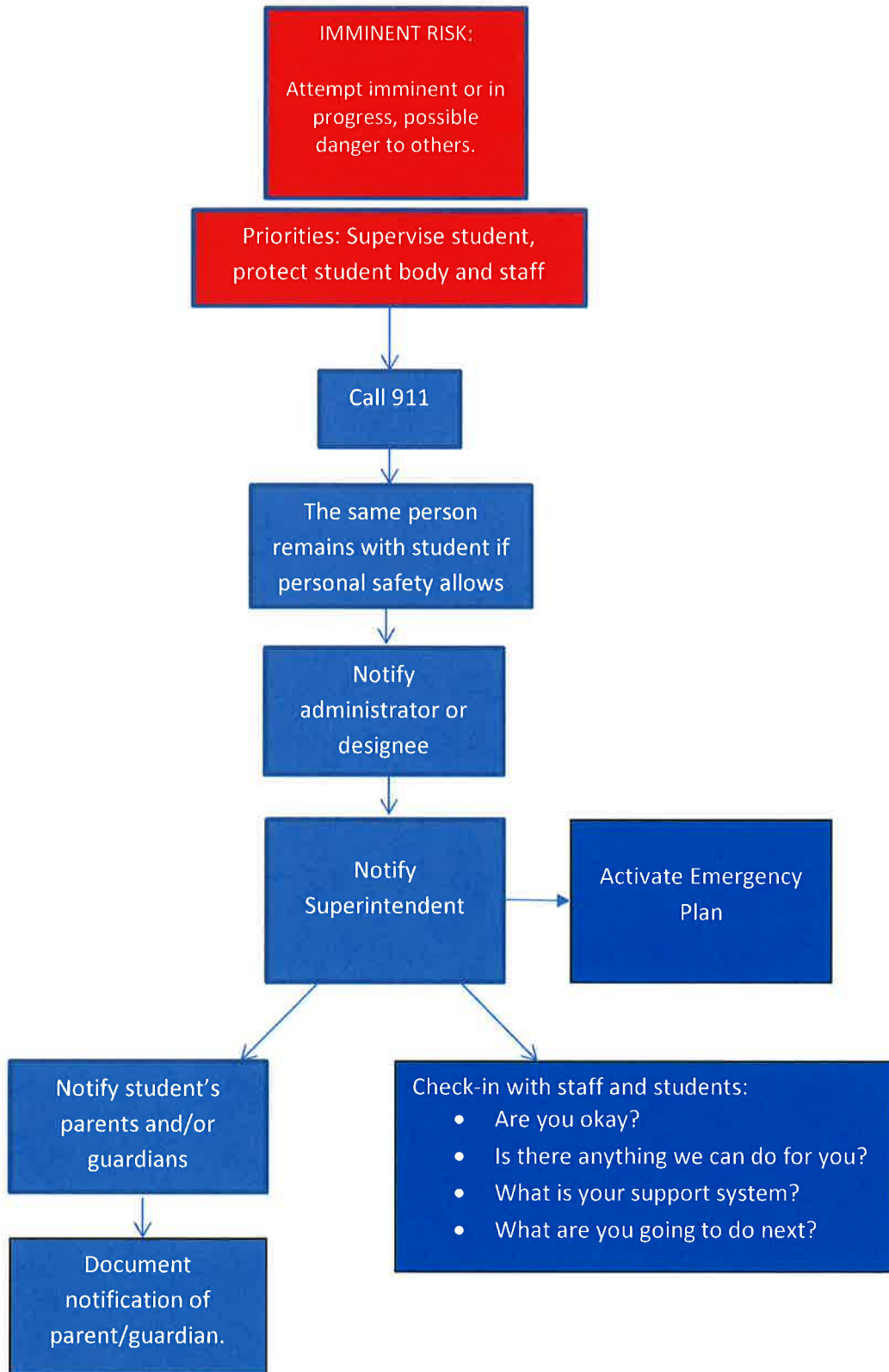
The administrator or other designee will do the following:

- Call 911 or designate a person to call. Be mindful that in the presence of a weapon or danger to others, emergency medical personnel will need the scene secured by law enforcement personnel before they can intervene.
- Notify the Superintendent.

Depending on the situation, the administrator or designee will:

- Even with no danger to others, if a suicide attempt is imminent or in progress, other students need to be removed quickly and calmly from the vicinity. (Execute emergency plan.)
- Notify the student's guardian and/or emergency contact and document the time and content of the conversation.
- Fill out the district's incident report forms.

CHART 1: IMMINENT RISK



A school employee shall act only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license.

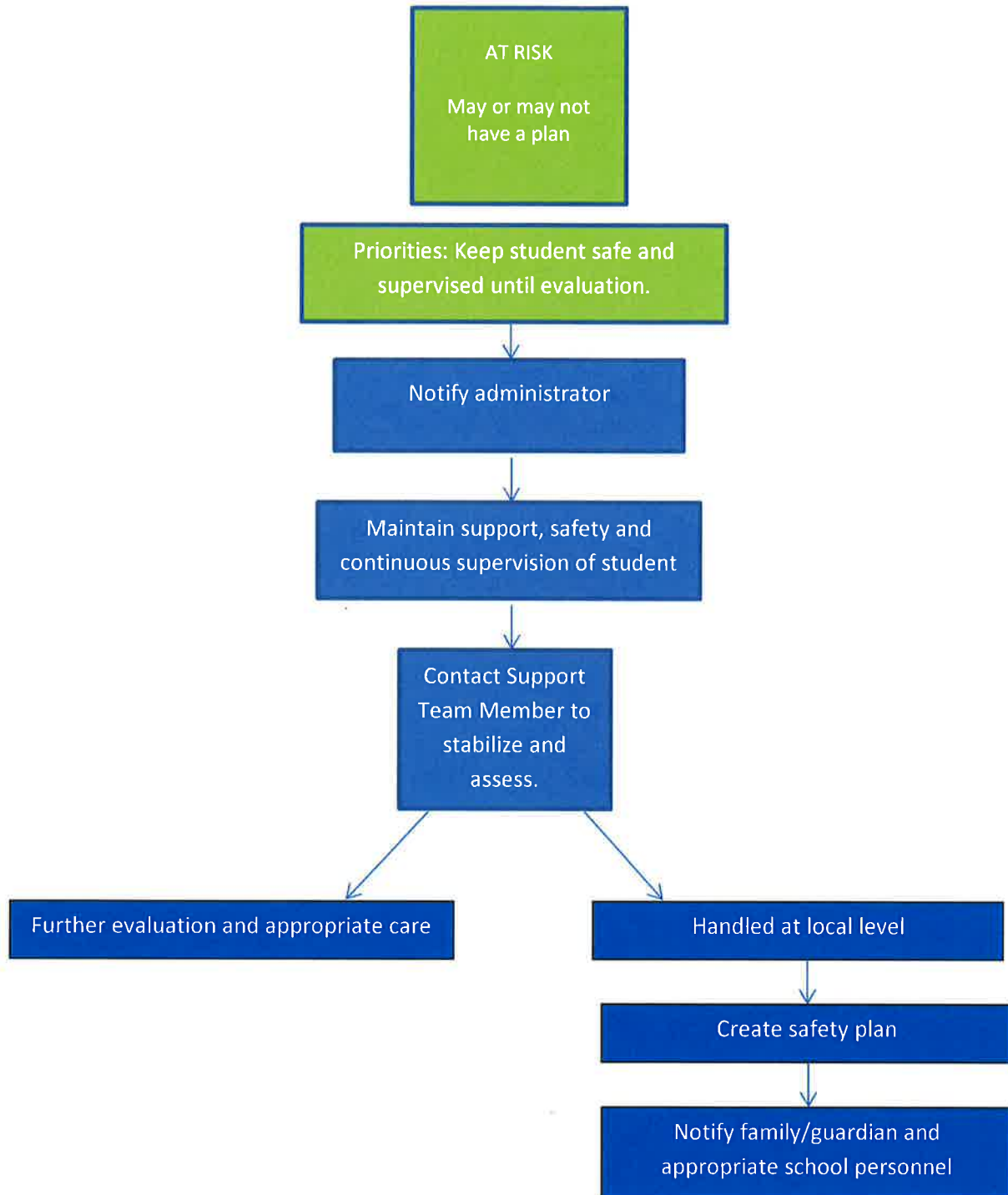
## AT RISK

- The student identifies thoughts of death but has no plan, intent to die, or suicidal behavior.
- The student identifies thoughts of death and may have a plan, intent to die or suicidal behavior.
- The student is experiencing some stressors.

The administrator or designee will do the following:

- Remain with the student and provide support, safety, and continuous supervision.
- Contact support team members (school counselor, behavioral counselor, school psychologist, Lassen County Behavioral Health).
- The administrator must be notified if the student will be leaving school grounds.
- If the assessment is that the student needs additional evaluation, appropriate arrangements will be made.

CHART 2: AT RISK



A school employee shall act only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license.

## **Post Intervention**

Westwood Unified recognizes that the death of a student, whether by suicide or other means, is a crisis that affects the entire school and community. In the event of a student's death, it is critical that the school's response be swift, consistent, and intended to protect the student body and community. In the case of a death by suicide, other concerns such as the prevention of suicide contagion will be taken into account.

### **CONFIRMING THE NEWS AND CONVENING THE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TEAM**

Upon receiving news of a student's death, including an unconfirmed rumor, a staff member must immediately contact the Superintendent, Principal, and/or designee. Contact must be made whether this is during or outside school hours.

- The Superintendent, Principal, or designee will contact:
  - Lassen County Office of Education (LCOE) County Superintendent of Schools
  - Superintendent/Principal, or designee will deploy self-plan (see emergency handbook) and identify key staff who will comprise the support team; i.e., teaching and classified staff, parents, students, and/or community members.
  - Compose a potential "blanket statement" to share with students and staff so the same message is disseminated to everyone.
  
- The LCOE County Superintendent of Schools will convene the educational support team which may include:
  - Administrators
  - Behavioral Counselors
  - School Psychologists

## **Before School Begins on the First Day**

The Superintendent, Principal, or designee will:

- Release accurate and concise information according to district policy.
- Convene a school wide staff meeting to provide accurate information and to identify any potential high-risk students.
- Notify the other school districts or call the LCOE for assistance.

## **Items for Staff Meeting Agenda**

- Assign personnel to identify and address high-risk students.
- Provide accurate information.
- Manage suicide contagion.
- Provide appropriate support to staff or send someone to his/her classroom.
- Make and set a time for debriefing.

Debriefing:

- Debriefing is critical to handling the next crisis better.
- Emphasis on improvement – What? When? Where? Why?

## Westwood Unified School District

### STUDENT SUICIDE RISK DOCUMENTATION FORM

STUDENT INFORMATION		
Date student was identified as possible at risk:		
Name:		
Date of Birth:	Gender:	Grade:
Name of Parent/Guardian:		
Parent/Guardian's Phone Number(s):		
IDENTIFICATION OF SUICIDE RISK		
Who identified student as being at risk? Indicate name where appropriate.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (him/herself): <input type="checkbox"/> Parent: <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher: <input type="checkbox"/> Other staff: <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Friend: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
Reason for concern:		
RISK ASSESSMENT		
Assessment conducted by:		
Date of assessment:		
Type of assessment conducted:		
Results of assessment:		
NOTIFICATION OF PARENT/GUARDIAN		
Staff who notified parent/guardian:		
Date/time notified:		
Parent Contact Acknowledgement Form signed: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If no, provide reason:		
MENTAL HEALTH REFERRAL		
Student referred to:	Date of Referral:	
Safety Plan developed with student and parent: _____ (date)		
Mental Health Resources List and Student/Parent given to:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student _____ (date) <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian _____ (date)		
Staff member to conduct follow-up:	Date of follow-up:	



## **GUIDELINES FOR NOTIFYING PARENTS**

Parents or guardians should be contacted as soon as possible after a student has been identified as being at risk for suicide. The person who contacts the family is typically the principal, school psychologist, or a staff member with a special relationship with the student or family. Staff need to be sensitive toward the family's culture, including attitudes toward suicide, mental health, privacy, and help-seeking.

1. Notify the parents about the situation and ask that they come to the school immediately.
2. When the parents arrive at the school, explain why you think their child is at risk for suicide.
3. Explain the importance of removing from the home (or locking up) firearms and other dangerous items, including over-the-counter and/or prescription medications and alcohol.
4. If the student is at risk and does not need to be hospitalized, discuss available options for individual and/or family therapy. Provide the parents with the contact information of mental health service providers in the community. If possible, call and make an appointment while the parents are with you.
5. Ask the parents to sign the Parent Contract Acknowledgement Form confirming that they were notified of their child's risk and received referrals to treatment.
6. Tell the parents that you will follow-up with them in a few days. If this follow-up conversation reveals that the parent has not contacted a mental health provider:
  - Stress the importance of getting the child help.
  - Discuss why they have not contacted a provider and offer to assist with the process.
7. If the student does not need to be hospitalized, release the student to the parents and notify the site administrator.
8. If the parents refuse to seek services for a child under the age of 18 who you believe is in danger of self-harm, you may need to notify child protective services that the child is being neglected.
9. Document **all** contacts with the parents.

## Parent Contact Acknowledgement Form

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

This is to verify that I have spoken with a member of the school's staff

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
concerning my child's suicidal risk. I have been advised to see the services of a mental health agency or therapist immediately.

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of staff member)  
will follow-up with me, my child, and the mental health care provider to whom my child has been referred for services within two weeks.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Contact Information:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

School Staff Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_