

Policy Title: Student Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention

Idaho Code § 33-136(3)(a) requires that school districts adopt student suicide procedures addressing prevention, intervention, and postvention. The State Department of Education has adopted the following Model Policy on Suicide Prevention to serve as a guide for districts.

SUICIDE-SAFER POLICY

This policy addresses appropriate school responses to suicidal or high-risk behaviors by students taking place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored events where staff are present, on school buses or vehicles, and at bus stops or after any student, staff, or school-community death. Neither a teacher nor a school district shall have a duty to warn of the suicidal tendencies of a student absent the teacher's knowledge of direct evidence of such suicidal tendencies (Idaho Code § 33-512B).

PREVENTION

The procedures will include but are not limited to:

1. Suicide Prevention Coordinator

A district-level suicide prevention coordinator will be designated by the superintendent or his or her designee. The coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of district procedures relating to student suicide prevention.

2. Staff Professional Development

All staff employed by the district shall receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, resources about youth suicide prevention, and information about groups of students at elevated risk for suicide.

3. Youth Suicide Prevention Programing

Developmentally appropriate, student-centered education materials on suicide prevention will be integrated into the curriculum of all K-12 health classes. The content of these age-appropriate materials will be evidence-based or research informed, and follow national safe messaging guidelines.

INTERVENTION

The procedures will include but are not limited to:

1. Assessment and Referral

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, the student will be seen by a school employed mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no mental health professional available, a school staff member will accompany and observe the student until a mental health professional can be brought in or emergency services are engaged.

2. In-School Suicide Attempts

In the case of an in-school suicide attempt, the student will be supervised and first aid will be rendered, other students will be moved out of the immediate area, staff will request a mental health assessment, and the student's parent or guardian will be notified.

3. Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-school location, the staff member will call 911 and contact the police or emergency medical services. The staff member will inform the school suicide prevention coordinator and principal. All actions shall be documented.

4. Parental Notification and Involvement

A student's parent or guardian will be notified by the building administrator or designee in the event a student is believed to be at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt. However, if school staff, in their professional capacity, believe that contacting the parent or guardian would endanger the health or well-being of the student, Child Protective Services must be contacted and a delay in notification may occur. The reasons for contacting Child Protective Services and the delay shall be documented.

In the event a student has exhibited suicidal behavior, school staff will discuss with the parent or guardian the ability to limit the student's access to mechanisms for carrying out a suicide attempt.

5. Re-entry Procedure

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis such as a suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization, a school designee, such as a mental health professional or the principal will meet with the student's parent or guardian. If possible, the school designee will also meet with a hospital designee and the student, if appropriate, to develop a re-entry plan that addresses the student's readiness to return to school and outline steps the school will take to assist the student's re-entry to school.

POSTVENTION

The procedures will include but are not limited to:

1. Development and Implementation of an Action Plan

In advance of any student death, a crisis team or the suicide prevention coordinator or other designee will develop an action plan to guide the school response following a death by suicide. A meeting to implement the plan shall take place immediately following word of the suicide death, even if the death has not yet been confirmed to be a suicide.

The action plan will follow national best practices for postvention and will include the following steps: verify the death, alert the State Department of Education, assess the situation, share situationally appropriate information, avoid suicide contagion, and initiate support services for students and staff.

2. External Communication

The principal or designee will be the sole media spokesperson. Staff will refer all inquiries from the media directly to the spokesperson. The spokesperson will encourage all news media to follow safe messaging guidelines.