

## R 5350 STUDENT SUICIDE

~~The following regulations are established for guidance of staff members in recognizing the student who contemplates suicide, in responding to threatened or attempted suicide, and in preventing contagion when a student commits suicide. Because a prompt response may be essential to a student's life, the designation of a district position in these regulations includes the person who holds that position and, if the position holder is absent or unavailable, the person temporarily charged with the responsibilities of the position.~~

### A. ~~Recognition of Potential Suicide~~

~~All school personnel, both teaching staff members and support staff members, shall be alert to any sign that a student may be contemplating suicide. Such signs include, but are not necessarily limited to, a student's:~~

- ~~1. Overt suggestion, regardless of its context, that he/she is considering or has considered suicide or has worked out the details of a suicide attempt;~~
- ~~2. Evidence of preparation of a will, intention to dispose of his/her effects and belongings, or otherwise get life "in order";~~
- ~~3. Obsession with death or afterlife;~~
- ~~4. Possession of a weapon or other means of suicide or obsession with such means;~~
- ~~5. Sense of hopelessness or unrelieved sadness;~~
- ~~6. Lethargy or despondency, or, conversely, a tendency to become more impulsive or aggressive than usual;~~
- ~~7. Drop in academic achievement, slacking off of energy and effort, or inability to focus on studies;~~
- ~~8. Isolation from others by loss of friends, withdrawal from friends, lack of companionship, or family disintegration;~~
- ~~9. Preoccupation with nonexistent physical ills;~~
- ~~10. Loss of weight, appetite, and/or sleep;~~
- ~~11. Substance abuse; and~~



~~12. Loss of economic resources.~~

~~B. Response to Potential Suicide~~

- ~~1. Any indication of a potential suicide, whether personally witnessed or received by report from another, must be taken seriously and must be reported to the Principal immediately.~~
- ~~2. The Principal shall immediately inform the Child Study Team, which shall investigate the matter promptly and conduct such evaluations as may be appropriate.~~
- ~~3. The Principal will inform the student's parent, in a conference if possible, of the signs demonstrated by the student and of the district's concern and seek parental approval of the student's evaluation. In the event parental abuse or neglect is suspected, the Principal or the employee who forms the suspicion will immediately so inform the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency in accordance with Policy 8462.~~
- ~~4. If the threat of suicide is immediate and serious, the Principal may appoint teaching staff members and/or Child Study Team members to a suicide intervention team, which shall determine the potential of the threat by directly questioning the student, without mincing words, about:
  - ~~a. Whether any suicide plans have been made, how detailed the plans are, and whether any preliminary actions have been taken,~~
  - ~~b. The student's feelings of hopelessness and the length of time the student has had such feelings,~~
  - ~~c. The student's thoughts of suicide and how persistent and strong those thoughts are, and~~
  - ~~d. Whether the student has considered alternative courses of action to resolve his/her problems.~~~~
- ~~5. After gathering information, the suicide intervention team shall determine the life threatening risk of the situation based on the student's signs of possible suicide (paragraph A1) and the student's responses to questioning.~~
- ~~6. If it is determined that a substantial risk of suicide exists, the Suicide Intervention Team shall:~~



- a. ~~Assign staff members as required to assure that the student is never out of the presence of an adult who has been fully informed that the student may be in danger of self destruction;~~
  - b. ~~Refer the student to the Child Study Team for comprehensive evaluation;~~
  - c. ~~Notify the student's parent immediately and strongly recommend consultation with a licensed mental health professional or agency;~~
  - d. ~~Request the parent to sign a release of information form authorizing the chosen mental health professional or agency to share with appropriate district personnel such relevant information as premature termination of treatment, additional threats and/or attempts of suicide, and continuing warning signs.~~
7. ~~A member of the Suicide Intervention Team will be appointed to follow up on the student's progress and to determine whether the student's parent has consulted a mental health professional or agency. Follow up reports will be made to the Principal.~~
  8. ~~If the student's parent does not sign the release of information form or does not cooperate in a comprehensive Child Study Team evaluation or does not seek treatment for the student, the Principal shall inform the Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency.~~
- C. ~~Response to Suicide Attempt~~
1. ~~Any attempted suicide, whether or not on school premises or during the school day, must be reported immediately to the Principal.~~
  2. ~~The staff member who witnesses a suicide attempt on school premises or at a school sponsored event or in the course of school related travel shall render first aid in accordance with Policy 8441 and summon medical assistance as appropriate.~~
  3. ~~Procedures outlined at paragraph B2 through paragraph B8 above will be followed.~~



D. ~~Prevention of Suicide Contagion~~

1. ~~All district Principals will be promptly informed when a student of this district commits suicide.~~
2. ~~Each Principal will assemble teaching staff members prior to the opening of school to provide them with accurate information, plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of students.~~
3. ~~The Principal of the school or building that the victim attended will assign a crisis team from the student personnel staff to assist the staff in dealing with the general school situation and any individual problems that may arise.~~
4. ~~The suicide will not be given prominence by public announcement or a school-wide assembly. School will not be closed in order to permit students and staff members to attend the victim's funeral.~~
5. ~~Teachers will respond to the needs of students with as little interruption of the educational program as possible.~~
6. ~~Students will be provided with accurate information and will be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings of loss and their memories of the victim, both good and bad, without penalty.~~
7. ~~All school personnel shall be especially alert to signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.~~
8. ~~Teaching staff members, under the direction of the Principal, shall attempt to prevent social contagion by:~~
  - a. ~~Preventing glorification or romanticization of the suicide,~~
  - b. ~~Helping students recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems,~~
  - c. ~~Encouraging students to ask probing questions when a fellow student suggests suicide and to report such suggestions to a teaching staff member, and~~
  - d. ~~Discussing ways of handling depression and anxiety without resort to self-destruction.~~



9. ~~Students who were close to the victim, and their parent, shall be offered special counseling services and notified of available community mental health services.~~

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[See POLICY ALERT Nos. 96, 209 and 215]

## R 5350 STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION

The following are guidelines to assist school district staff members in recognizing the warning signs of a student who may be contemplating suicide, to respond to a threat or attempted suicide, and to prevent contagion when a student commits suicide.

### A. Recognition of Warning Signs of Suicide

All school district staff members shall be alert to any warning signs a student may be contemplating suicide. Such warning signs may include, but are not limited to, a student(s):

1. Overt suggestion, regardless of its context, that he/she is considering or has considered suicide or has worked out the details of a suicide attempt;
2. Self-mutilation;
3. Obsession with death or afterlife;
4. Possession of a weapon or possession of other means of suicide or obsession with such means;
5. Sense of hopelessness or unrelieved sadness;
6. Lethargy or despondency, or, conversely, a tendency to become more impulsive or aggressive than usual;
7. Drop in academic achievement, slacking-off of energy and effort, or inability to focus on studies;
8. Isolation from others by loss of friends, withdrawal from friends, lack of companionship, or family disintegration;



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9. Preoccupation with nonexistent physical illness;
  10. Loss of weight, appetite, and/or sleep;
  11. Substance abuse;
  12. Volatile mood swings or sudden changes in personality;
  13. Prior suicide attempt(s);
  14. Anxiety or eating disorder;
  15. Involvement in an unhealthy, destructive, or abusive relationship; and
  16. Depression due to being a victim/target of harassment, intimidation, bullying, or mistreatment by others.
- B. Response to the Warning Signs of Suicide
1. Any indication of suicide, whether personally witnessed or received by a report from another, shall be taken seriously and immediately reported to the Principal or designee. Upon receiving such report, the Principal will ensure the student is supervised by a school staff member until a preliminary assessment of the risk is determined.
  2. The Principal or designee shall immediately contact the parent(s) of the student exhibiting warning signs of suicide to inform the parent(s) that the student will be referred to the Child Study Team or a Suicide Intervention Team for a preliminary assessment in accordance with C. below.
  3. If the threat of suicide is immediate and serious, the Principal will contact local law enforcement and the Superintendent of Schools.
- C. Preliminary Assessment and Recommendation(s)
1. The Principal or designee will designate the Child Study Team or the Suicide Intervention Team to immediately meet with the student to complete a preliminary assessment.



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2. The Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team will make a recommendation(s), based on the preliminary assessment, to the Principal or designee regarding the student's risk of suicide.
3. Upon receiving the recommendation(s), the Principal or designee will immediately meet with the parent(s) to review the findings of the preliminary assessment. Based on the recommendation(s) of the Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team, the student may be:
  - a. Permitted to remain in school:
    - (1) If the student remains in school after the preliminary assessment, the Principal or designee will designate a school staff member to follow-up with the student on any recommendations of the Child Study Team or Suicide Intervention Team.
  - b. Referred to the Child Study Team for further evaluation;
  - c. Removed from the school and released to the parent(s) and will be required to obtain medical or psychiatric services before the student may return to school:
    - (1) The parent(s) will be required to submit to the Superintendent a written medical clearance from a licensed medical professional selected by the parent(s) and acceptable to the Superintendent, indicating the student has received medical services, does not present a risk to himself/herself or others, and is cleared to return to school. The Superintendent will not act unreasonably in withholding approval of the medical professional selected by the parent(s). The written medical clearance may be reviewed by a Board of Education healthcare professional before the student is permitted to return to school.
    - (2) The parent(s) shall be required to authorize their healthcare professional(s) to release the student's relevant medical information to the school district's healthcare professional, if requested.



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d. Required to comply with the recommendation(s) outlined in C.3.a., b., and/or c. above, and/or any other recommendation(s) of the Principal or designee to ensure the student's safety and the safety of others.

4. In the event the parent(s) objects to the recommendation(s) or indicates an unwillingness to cooperate with the school district regarding their child, the Principal or designee will contact the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency to request intervention on the student's behalf.

### D. Response to Attempted Suicide by a Student

1. Any school district staff member, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe a student has attempted suicide, shall immediately report the information to the Principal or designee or their immediate supervisor.
2. A Principal or designee or supervisor who receives a report of a student who has attempted suicide will immediately report it to the Superintendent or designee, who shall promptly report it online to the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, or as otherwise required by the Department of Children and Families.
3. The school district staff member who witnesses a suicide attempt on school grounds, at a school sponsored event, or on a school bus shall immediately contact local law enforcement and emergency medical services, as appropriate.

### E. Response to Suicide Committed by a Student

1. Any school district staff member, volunteer, or intern with reasonable cause to suspect or believe a student has committed suicide, shall immediately report the information to the Principal or designee or their immediate supervisor.
2. A Principal or designee or supervisor who receives a report that a student has committed suicide will immediately report it to the Superintendent or designee, who shall promptly report it online to the New Jersey





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Department of Children and Families, or as otherwise required by the Department of Children and Families.

3. The Principal of the school the student attended will assemble school staff members as soon as possible, to provide school staff members information, plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of students.
  4. The Principal of the school the student attended will use a School Crisis Team to assist school staff members in dealing with any issues that arise due to the situation and to assist students in the loss.
  5. The School Crisis Team will assist teachers in responding to the needs of students. Students who were close to the victim shall be offered special counseling services and parents will be notified of available community mental health services.
  6. School staff members shall be especially alert to warning signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.
  7. All Principals in the school district will be promptly informed when a student enrolled in the district commits suicide. The district, with the approval of the Superintendent, may provide support and services to school staff members and students as needed.
  8. The Principal of the school the student attended may, with the approval of the Superintendent, provide any additional support and services that will assist school staff members and students in the loss.
- F. Prevention of Suicide Contagion
1. School staff members, under the direction of the Principal or designee, shall attempt to prevent suicide contagion by:
    - a. Avoiding the glorification or romanticization of suicide;
    - b. Helping students recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems;



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- c. Encouraging students to ask questions when a fellow student suggests suicide and report to a school staff member;
- d. Discussing ways of handling depression and anxiety without resorting to self-destruction; and
- e. Implementing any other strategies to prevent suicide contagion.

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