

Lisbon School District

15 Newent Road
Lisbon, CT 06351

5141.5

Students

Suicide Prevention Policy

It is the policy of the Lisbon Board of Education to provide suicide awareness training for students through curriculum offerings, and for staff and parents by means of periodic meetings regarding prevention. Intervention services are provided to at risk and high risk students. Postvention services are provided as needed. Each situation in which a student indicates an intent to attempt suicide or to perform physical bodily harm to him or herself is actively managed through appropriate postvention strategies.

The management of all services to intended suicidal students requires a cooperative, well coordinated effort by all members of the Crisis Intervention Team. It is the intent of this policy to insure that all practices and procedures are properly carried out.

Policy Adopted – 12/1990 – Lisbon Board of Education

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Suicide Prevention – Intervention Procedure

When a staff member in the Lisbon Public School System has a suspicion, is confronted with a situation in which a student makes a statement of suicidal thinking, or it appears that an attempt at suicide is possible, the following actions will take place:

- I. The staff member will immediately refer the student to the Principal who will assemble the Crisis Intervention Team consisting of the school nurse, teacher, counselor, Director of Special Education, and principal. The Crisis Intervention Team will follow their designated guidelines for dealing with student referrals. The Principal is responsible for keeping the Superintendent informed.
 - a) In the event the staff member perceives that a student has taken action which creates a medical emergency, the school nurse will be notified immediately and emergency medical procedures will be followed.
 - b) The counselor will meet with the student to assess the student's status immediately. AT NO TIME DURING THIS PROCESS IS THE STUDENT TO BE LEFT ALONE.
 - c) The counselor will notify the principal as to the outcome of the risk assessment. According to these results one of the following will occur:
 - 1) If the student is found to be at risk for an attempt at suicide, the parent will be notified of the referral and of all conclusions reached by the Crisis Intervention Team.
 - 2) If the student is found to be at high risk of suicide, immediate contact will be made with a parent or guardian and a conference will be held the same day. During the conference, the parent or guardian will be advised that an immediate psychiatric assessment is needed. The Crisis Intervention Team will serve as an integral part of the entire referral process. Under no circumstances is a student allowed to go home alone. The student must be released only to the parent, guardian, or responsible adult.

It is the intent of the Lisbon Board of Education to ensure that all of the necessary components of in-service training are readily available to students, parents, and staff.

- 1) Student In-Service:
 - a) Awareness Training will be included as an integral part of the Health Curriculum.
 - b) Additional awareness training will be provided through group discussions, conducted by the school counselor as part of our group counseling program.

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Suicide Prevention – Intervention Procedure (cont)

- 2) Staff In-Service:
 - a) Awareness training will be conducted for all staff members through our Staff Development Plan.
 - b) All staff members will have a copy of our Suicide Prevention Policy and will participate in an orientation program that is designed to train staff members in the intervention and postvention strategies.
- 3) Parent In-Service:
 - a) Periodic meetings will be held for parents and appropriate information regarding suicide prevention will be promulgated during these educational forums. At least two meetings will be held each school year.
 - b) The school counselor will maintain contact with the student's mental health professionals to support programming needs and follow-up procedures.
 - c) Failure on the part of the family to take seriously and provide for the safety of the student in case of potential suicide will be considered emotional neglect and may be reported to the Department of Children and Families. (cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse / Neglect)
 - d) A report will be written indicating those activities performed to follow through and ensure the safety and well-being of the student.

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Appendix B

Warning Signs

It is important to note that adolescence is often a time of change and mood swings. When considering possible warning signs of suicide, you should look for the pattern (several related signs), the duration (2 or more weeks of a given pattern), the intensity and the presence of a particular crisis event. You should measure these against what is perceived to be normal for a given adolescent.

Perhaps, most importantly, you should trust your instincts. When in doubt, seek help. Any young person exhibiting some combination of these signs is probably in need of some type of help.

Many of the risk factors listed in Appendix A are, in hindsight, seen as early warning signs for suicide following a suicide death. Observation of the following signals of severe emotional distress or overt suicide warning signs, especially when combined with two or more risk factors from Appendix A must be reported to the principal or his / her designee as soon as possible.

Early Warning Signs

Difficulty coping with any of the risk factors in Appendix A.

- Sudden or unexpected changes in school behavior such as:
 - attendance
 - declining academic performance
 - changed peer relationships
 - sudden failure to complete work
 - loss of interest; inability to concentrate
 - disciplinary crisis, especially involving violence or aggression
 - communicating about death, suicide through writing, artwork, class discussion
- Increased frequency and / or quantity of alcohol and other drug use sudden changes in appearance - especially neglect of appearance
- Gradual withdrawal from friends, schools, family; loss of interest in activities
- Sudden or increasingly negative changes in personality and attitude
- Depression (may be expressed as sadness or angry acting out)
- Sleep disturbances - (inability to sleep or sleeping to “escape”)
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite, sudden weight gain or loss, eating disorders)
- Restlessness and agitation (especially if perceived as uncontrollable)
- Over-reaction to criticism; overly self critical
- Overwhelming feelings of failure, worthlessness

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Appendix B

Warning Signs (cont)

- Failure or inability to derive pleasure from one's life, friends, activities
- Exaggerated or long term apathy and disinterest
- Inability to recover from a loss; ongoing and overwhelming feelings of grief
- Excessive frequency and intensity of mood swings (especially if perceived as uncontrollable)
- Persistent nightmare
- Frequent expressions of hostility, anger, rage (especially if perceived as uncontrollable)
- Pessimism about life, about one's future
- Persistent physical complaints (especially if no physiological basis can be found) such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, anxiety reactions
- Difficulties in concentration, completing tasks, making decisions (especially if perceived as uncontrollable)
- Delusions or hallucinations; loss of touch with reality

Late Warning Signs

- Threatening to commit suicide, openly talking about death, not being around, not being wanted or needed
- Dropping out of activities; increasing isolation and withdrawal
- Feelings of helplessness, inability to change or control one's life
- Feelings of extreme humiliation, loss of status
- Radical personality or behavioral change
- Sudden or increasingly dangerous risk taking behavior
- Increasing feelings of alone-ness, despair; perception that no-one can help
- Increasing loss of control over behavior
- Making final arrangements; giving things away, putting one's life in order
- Sudden and inexplicable improvement in behavior, appearance

Precipitating Events - Often one event will seem to trigger a suicide or suicide attempt. The most common of these seems to be:

- Loss of a close relationship through:
 - Death
 - Divorce
- Breaking up with boyfriend / girlfriend
- Suicide of a friend, family member or someone youth has known or identified with

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Appendix B

Warning Signs (cont)

- Unexpected loss of status with peers or failure to achieve such status
- Serious fight with parents or close peer
- Being arrested for a crime (especially if incarcerated)
- Sudden or unexpected failure or setback
- Recent traumatic event such as moving, a car accident, a major loss or disciplinary crisis that makes facing the future seems impossible
- Anniversary of someone else's suicide or death
- Fear of a major change in life status such as graduation, moving
- Actual major life change such as going to college, staying behind while friends go to college

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