

Sparta Area School District

Article 730 – Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention

The Sparta Area School District recognizes a need to provide suicide prevention, intervention, postvention and education as an integral part of a child's total educational program. School personnel cannot solve this serious problem alone, but the district can and should play a role in preventing these unnecessary deaths. The chances of a student attempting or completing suicide are lessened if the early warning signals are recognized and the student receives the necessary professional assistance.

While it is understood that district employees do not have the expertise in the general area of mental health or the specific area of adolescent suicide, the district shall make an effort to train school personnel to recognize clues that a student may be at risk, respond to a suicide threat or attempt, and help the students and school move positively forward should a suicide occur. This three-legged approach to suicide includes prevention, intervention and postvention.

Prevention

Training in coping skills shall be included in the K-12 guidance curricula to be provided primarily through developmental guidance lessons and health classes. The focus of this curriculum shall include:

Decision making skills

Recognition of life threatening behaviors: Students shall be taught how to recognize symptoms of stress in self and others as well as how to contact resources for dealing with these stresses. These preventative requirements are consistent with Wisconsin State Statute expectations under 118.01(2) (d) 7.

Beginning in the fall of 2007, staff training will be available on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, intervention procedures, postvention, resources and self-care. This training will be in the form of staff in-service and will include a suicide prevention, intervention and postvention handbook.

TeenScreen, a mental health screening tool, will be available to all students in grades 9 through 12 within the district, regardless of their school. No student will be required by school staff to participate in the screening.

Intervention

A teacher or other school personnel who has reason to believe, either by direct knowledge or a report from another person, that a student is in danger of harming himself or herself through an attempted suicide, is to report the situation immediately to the building administrator or a member of the Crisis Intervention network. This does not negate mandatory reporting requirements for the original contact.

If the student's life is in imminent danger, the building administrator and/or Crisis Intervention team member will summon law enforcement personnel to transport the student to the nearest hospital emergency room. The student should not be left alone. The staff member should personally escort the student to a guidance counselor or school psychologist, or send another person to obtain assistance from these pupil service providers or a school administrator or in his/her absence a district level administrator.

Unless it is apparent that such notification will exacerbate the situation, the building administrator or pupil services team member shall contact the student's parents/guardians/family to inform them that their child has attempted or is planning to attempt suicide and request that they meet with the school staff.

In an actual attempted suicide, the health and safety of the student is paramount. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation arrives. The principal and student's parents will be contacted and informed immediately.

Postvention

After the immediate crisis has been resolved, the building administrator and the pupil services team shall meet to evaluate the situation and decide on an appropriate role for the school to take in assisting the student. The group should appoint a case manager to keep close contact with the student and the community agencies treating the student to ensure a coordinated school and agency approach.

When an outside agency has been used, the case manager will request a release of information form which will allow a two-way flow of information between the school and the community agency.

Teachers involved with the student shall be invited to an informational staffing to aid them in appropriately dealing with and assisting the student.

The pupil services staff person assigned as case manager shall maintain a written record of all actions taken by the school and shall perform monitoring and follow-up functions to support the student and assist the teachers after the student returns to class. While school is in session, the case manager shall maintain regular contact with the parents during the 60-day time period following the referral.

The case manager shall make a report to the building administrator and pupil services team at the end of the 60 days (or before the end of the school year, whichever comes first) to clarify the status of the student at that time. The building administrator and the pupil services team shall determine what, if any, further action shall be taken.

The case manager shall meet with the student's parents to inform them of the decisions of the school staff on district follow-up and to obtain their input.

Teachers and other school personnel should be aware that in many cases where a student discusses suicide, the student might request confidentiality. If the subject matter deals with suicidal behavior, concern for confidentiality must be secondary to concern for the student's safety. Most important, action must not be delayed. This requirement is consistent with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention handbook will be available as a resource and reference tool for faculty, staff and administration. The handbook outlines risk factors, warning signs, and procedures for addressing suicide, media, memorials, and protocol for students returning to school.

Legal Reference: Wisconsin State Statutes 118.01(2) (a) (7), 118.01(2) (d) 7
Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

Cross Reference: Article 164 – Mandatory Reporting
Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention
Guidelines

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