

## **ROBERT BENJAMIN WILEY COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL**

### **TITLE: SUICIDE AWARENESS , PREVENTION AND RESPONSE**

ADOPTED: February 9, 2016

The Charter School and its Board of Trustees are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, response to suicide or suicide attempt and reporting procedures; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources. Elements of the policy are in compliance with the added section 1526 of the school code which requires schools entities, including charter schools to

1. Adopt a youth suicide awareness and prevention policy and
2. Provide ongoing professional development in youth suicide awareness and prevention for professional educators in buildings service students in grades 6-12.

Note: The Robert Benjamin Wiley Community Charter School has determined that all professional staff members will receive the required staff development regardless of the age/grade level of students they serve/teach.

This policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. This policy shall also apply following a student's suicide threat or attempt that does not occur on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel.

In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of the Charter School's suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the CEO's or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

#### Publication of Policy

The Charter School will notify its school personnel, age-appropriate students and all parents/guardians of this policy and will post the policy on the Charter School website.

#### ***Definitions***

**At-Risk for Suicide** shall mean any child or youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

**Crisis Response Team** shall include, but may not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselor, the school nurse, school psychologist, behavior support team as designated and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the CEO's. Community mental agency resources

including our on-site mental health clinic and Crisis Services may be called for assistance to be a part of the team.

**Expressed Suicidal Thoughts or Intentions** shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die, but has not acted on the behavior.

**Prevention** refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.

**Protective Factors** shall refer to characteristics (biological, psychological, and social) that reduce risk and the likelihood of the individual developing a mental illness.

**Resilience** shall refer to an individual's innate ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes.

**Risk Factors** shall mean the personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide. People affected by one or more of these risk factors have a great probability of suicidal behavior.

**School Connectedness** shall mean the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

**School Personnel** include, but may not be limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, coaches, custodians, and/or graduate assistants.

**Suicide** shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

**Suicidal Act or Suicide Attempt** shall mean a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill him/herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

**Warning Signs** are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger or suicide, either immediately or in the very near future.

The Charter School shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

## **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION**

### Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students in grade 5-8 shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as

help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help, following a school adopted curriculum.

Students in grade K-4 shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help as part of health education and social sciences.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

#### Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All Charter School employees, including but not limited to secretaries, coaches, custodians, and graduate assistants, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. In addition education on ways to enhance students' protective factors, build resilience and increase school connectedness will be provided.

As part of the Charter School's professional development plan, professional educators (and support staff who work directly with students) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to counselor, IU school psychologist, behavior support team and school nurse.

#### Resources for Parents/Guardians

The Charter School shall provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral/mental health resources. Access to the Charter School's on-site mental health clinic shall be made available to parents, regardless of ability to pay or insurance coverage. Print resources for parents will be available in parent room, at parent meetings and for parents for whom referrals have been made for suicide ideation, depression or related concerns. Links to resources shall be provided on school web site.

### **METHODS OF PREVENTION**

The methods of prevention utilized by the Charter School include, but are not limited to

#### Suicide Prevention Coordinators

A charter school suicide prevention coordinator selected from current staff (in most instances this will be the school counselor) shall be designated by CEO's. The coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy. The coordinator/counselor will be responsible for training staff on response issues. CEO's will be responsible for overall policy implementation.

The building's student assistance program team and/or child success team will act as the crisis response team.

The Charter School shall include suicide threats and risk into school safety plan and establish a crisis response team. . The crisis response team shall include, but is not limited to, CEOs, Director of Student Support Services, counselor, the school nurse, school psychologist, member of school Incident Command team. Crisis Services will serve as resource.

The crisis response team will include individuals designated as coordinators and/or investigators on cases involving peer-to-peer harassment/bullying as required under federal law. These individuals, will determine hostile environments created by persistent or severe harassment on the basis of gender, race, disability, or other protected classes. Director of Student Support Services shall serve as chair unless other staff member is designated by CEOs.

#### Early Identification Procedures

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the Charter School's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, Charter School employees, students and parents/guardians will be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs. Risk factors and reporting protocol will be included in Staff Procedures Manual and be included in annual mandated trainings.

**Risk factors** refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:

- Depression.
- Substance abuse or dependence.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Self-injury.

Personal Characteristics:

- Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
- Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
- Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
- Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.

Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:

- Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
- Disciplinary or legal problems.
- Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
- School or work issues.
- Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
- Exposure to peer suicide.

Family Characteristics:

- Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior. - Family mental health problems.
- Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
- Parental-Child relationship.

**Warning signs** are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

### Referral Procedures

Any Charter School employee who has identified a student with one (1) or more risk factors or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention. Referral should be made to school counselor, copying CEOs, nurses and Director of Student Support Services. If student is a special education student, the Special Education Coordinator will also be included. If student is participating in counseling through on site mental health clinic, counselor will be included. Parents will be included in referral process.

### Documentation

The Charter School shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk. IU contracted school psychologist will serve as resource in assessing risk factors, including parent contacts, use of student and parent interviews and diagnostic checklists.

## **METHODS OF INTERVENTION**

The methods of intervention utilized by the Charter School include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in school, suicide attempts outside of school, and completed suicide. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

### Procedures for Students at Risk

Parent or guardian of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be immediately notified by the school and shall be involved in consequent actions. Staff will meet with Parents to determine level of risk. In all instances a safety plan will be developed. Depending on level of risk, referral will be made for immediate Crisis Service Response, referral to inpatient mental health, referral to mental health services/counseling, support for families.

## **METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT**

The methods of response to a suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by the Charter School include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying and training the school crisis response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.
3. Notifying students, employees and parents/guardians.
4. Working with families to determine need for referrals or support services.
5. Responding appropriately to the media (following School Safety Plan Incident Command procedures..
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The CEOs or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event.

### Re-Entry Procedures

Excusing a student from school attendance after a mental health crisis and the student's return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.

The Charter School's CEO's, school psychologist, Director of Student Support Services or Coaches shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to school after a mental health crisis, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss reentry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to school. A safety plan will be developed and shared with all teachers, support staff (including bus monitors) who are in supervisory/instructional role with student during the day or in after school programs.

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated Charter School employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.

The designated Charter School employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into the school community and address any concerns. If the parent or guardian refuse to cooperate and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school personnel who directly witnessed the expressed suicide thought or intention will pursue a 302 involuntary mental health assessment by calling Crisis Services 2560 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street (814) 456-2014.) If determined necessary, a call

If a 302 involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from the CEO, school counselor and/or Director of Student Support Service.

The Charter School shall identify mental health service providers to whom students and parents/guardians can be referred for further assessment and assistance. Further referral may include referral for evaluation, counseling, acute partial, medical evaluation, etc.

**Mental health service providers** – may include, but not be limited to Crisis Services, Pediatric Emergency/In Patient Mental Health, school's on-site mental health clinic, other out patient mental health providers.

The Charter School shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

#### Students With Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. IEP team will meet to determine any need for evaluations or modifications to IEP or behavior plans.

If a student is identified as being at risk for suicide or attempts suicide and the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Coordinator of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

#### Documentation

The Charter School shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians and mental health service providers. The CEOs or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

### **REPORT PROCEDURES**

Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.

When a Charter School employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.

As stated in this policy, Charter School employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving potential suicide prevention, intervention and response.

All notes and reports involving potential suicide prevention, intervention and response shall immediately be provided to the designated coordinator (or special education coordinator if student has an IEP).

A copy of safety plan will be held in separate file.. Releases of information “from and to” any providers will be completed prior to sharing of information.

The Charter School’s suicide prevention coordinator/designee shall provide the CEOs with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to counselor and , Charter School mental health professionals and school nurse and other staff as deemed with “need to know.” Releases to share information with and between school and involved agencies/providers shall be kept on file and forwarded to appropriate agencies.

### **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES**

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention shall be attached to this policy and regularly updated and posted on the website.

School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 15-1526

State Board of Education Regulations – 22 Pa. Code 12.12

Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Jason Foundation: Resources for parents; staff development and curriculum resources.

<http://jasonfoundation.com/>

A comprehensive set of resources for youth suicide awareness and prevention is accessible through the Department at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)

PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative – <http://payspi.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center – <http://www.sprc.org/>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – <http://www.afsp.org/>

Reference: