

**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

**6027**

Suicide is a major cause of death among youth in the United States. Because suicide is preventable and in light of Wisconsin Statute 118.01(2)(d)7, it is the policy of the North Lake School District to operate a school-focused suicide prevention program by educating students, families, and school staff on how to recognize and intervene in potentially suicidal situations.

The Wisconsin legislature has created immunity from civil liability for certain individuals who in good faith attempt to prevent suicide of a student.

The District Administrator shall ensure the program is part of the District's developmental guidance program.

Wisconsin Statutes      118.01(2)(d)7  
   118.295

Cross Reference: Guidelines for Suicide Prevention,  
Intervention & Postvention

Adopted:            2-27-89  
Revised:            2-19-03

## **PROCEDURES: SUICIDE PREVENTION**

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Addendum A

The North Lake School District suicide prevention program has three elements: prevention, intervention, and postvention.

### **1. PREVENTION**

Prevention is defined as planned educational activities designed to achieve two broad goals:

- To promote the development of positive self-image and coping skills necessary to constructively deal with life.
- To develop the skills necessary to recognize and intervene in potentially suicidal situations.

#### **A. Prevention Activities for School Staff**

School staff is seen as the support system needed to be able to respond to crises as they occur within the school. Staff development activities will be held for all school staff to:

1. Sensitize staff to the problem
2. Promote understanding of warning signs to facilitate identification of a child at risk
3. Generate ideas on how to interact with a student
4. Delineate a referral chain within the school building of staff who would be available for help
5. Familiarize staff with community resources which could be used when school staff are not available
6. Impart knowledge of basic crisis intervention theory

#### **B. Prevention Activities for Students**

Prevention activities for students occur as part of the guidance and academic curriculum. The objectives for the curriculum are to:

1. Develop understanding of the emotional dynamics of depression and suicide in the context of normal development crises
2. Acquire knowledge of warning signs to help students know when they need to seek guidance for themselves or a close friend
3. Be aware of resources for help within the school and community
4. Develop an appreciation of the concept of shared responsibility
5. Understand the importance of not letting a promise of secrecy prevent the referral of a suicidal friend
6. Be aware of the steps to take to obtain help for a friend at risk or themselves

**2. INTERVENTION**

Intervention is defined as action that is taken by a team of trained school staff when a student threatens or attempts suicide. The school team consists of a counselor, administrator, school psychologist, and school social worker. The following referral chain has been established to deal with such crises.

- A. Teachers, students, or other concerned persons should notify a team member of a student identified as being at risk. Medical attention is requested immediately if needed.
- B. The student is interviewed by a team member, with another team member present, to assess the degree of risk involved and to negotiate a treatment plan with the student.
- C. If the risk is assessed to be immediate, the following procedure is to be followed:
  1. The student should not be left alone. A responsible adult shall remain with the student.
  2. The parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified immediately. Along with supportive help, a list of mental health agencies will be given to the parent(s) or guardian(s), and it will be strongly recommended that they seek appropriate professional help. The student will be released to the parent(s) or guardian(s). He/she will not be allowed to go home alone.
  3. School staff should not take the responsibility of treating a suicidal teen. However, after a referral for treatment has been made to a community agency or mental health professional, the staff functions in a supportive way and may often coordinate their work in the school setting with the student's therapist.
- D. If the assessment indicates that the situation is not life threatening, but that the student exhibits warning signs of potential suicide, the following procedures will be followed:
  1. A counseling plan will be developed in consultation with another team member of the crisis intervention team.
  2. The plan will be shared with the District Administrator to increase the effectiveness of the plan.
  3. Parents are involved in an interview with the student as soon as possible.

**3. POSTVENTION**

Postvention is defined as the action taken to deal with the grief and shock of family, friends, school population, and the community at large and to prevent the occurrence of the cluster suicide phenomena.

- A. All inquiries from the media and the general public will be directed to the building administrator.
- B. A team member will contact the family and be available for support as needed. Siblings in the school district will be provided with immediate crisis intervention counseling.
- C. The team will gather factual information about the suicide.
- D. Guidance counselors and other appropriate team members may be asked to assist in postvention efforts at any of the Arrowhead Area Schools. The mobilization of area team members will be used to assist students dealing with grief and shock immediately following a suicide. Other appropriate consultants may also be hired to assist staff and students.
- E. Factual information will be disseminated to the family. The faculty will:
  - 1. Present the information to their class about the suicide
  - 2. Allow ample time for student reaction and interaction
  - 3. Inform the students that concerned staff and counselors are immediately available
- F. The suicide victim's closest friends will be identified for in-school supportive counseling. These students will be monitored closely, and their parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted concerning the event.

**4. SCHOOL RECORDS**

Each professional staff member who is involved with a suicidal student will be responsible for maintaining his own personal notes regarding the case. No record of a student's suicidal behavior will become part of the student's school progress records. However, school staff members who are involved with the student may communicate this information with one another in order to carry out an effective treatment plan.