



Golden Valley Charter School Pupil Suicide Prevention Policy

The Governing Board and Golden Valley Charter School (GVCS) personnel recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that school personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate referral and/or assistance. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Executive Director or designee shall develop measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing measures and strategies for use by the school, the Executive Director or designee may consult with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

Such measures and strategies shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, parents, and other school employees who interact with students in all grades.
2. The provision of information to parents/guardians and staff regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the impact of the youth suicide problem, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.
3. Encouragement for students to notify appropriate school personnel or other adults when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.
4. Resource information to parents and staff on Crisis Intervention Procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts.
5. Resource information to parents and staff on Assessing for Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide.

Suicide awareness and prevention training shall regularly be provided to teachers and other school employees who interact with students at all grade levels. The same training will be offered to parents, who serve as the day-to-day teacher at GVCS. The training shall be offered utilizing materials developed by mental health experts and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies. This training will ensure that a school employee understands how to act and acts within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license.

Materials for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services within the student's community and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. Materials

will include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

Staff development shall include research and information related to the following topics:

1. The higher risk of suicide among certain student populations, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide; students with chronic illness or disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; students who are experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth.
2. Individual risk factors, such as, previous suicide attempt(s) or self-harm, history of depression or mental illness, family history of suicide, instability, or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, intense unstable relationships, impulsivity, substance abuse, and other factors.
3. Warning signs that may indicate depression, emotional distress, or suicidal intentions, such as, changes in student's personality or behavior and verbalizations of hopelessness or suicidal intent.
4. Protective factors that may help to decrease a person's suicide risk, such as resiliency, problem-solving ability, access to mental health care, and positive connections to family, peers, school, and community.
5. When and how to provide school and community resources and mental health services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups.
6. Intervening and referring when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.

Instruction

Golden Valley Charter School's comprehensive health education curriculum shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students and shall be aligned with the state content standards and curriculum framework. Suicide awareness and prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum at appropriate secondary grades and shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide.
2. Develop coping and resiliency skills and self-esteem.
3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.
4. Identify trusted adults, school resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking services for mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention.

Intervention

Intervention toward suicide awareness and prevention shall include, but not limited to:

1. Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.
2. Methods for promoting a positive climate at school-sponsored events that enhance students' feelings of connectedness with the school and that are characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among adults and students.
3. The provision of information to parents/guardians regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the impact of the youth suicide problem, the district's suicide prevention policy, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis

Crisis Intervention for Addressing Suicide Threats or Attempts

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm, he/she shall promptly notify the Executive Director or designee.

A school employee shall act only within the authorization and scope of his/her credential or license. An employee is not authorized to diagnose or treat mental illness unless he/she is specifically licensed and employed to diagnose or treat mental illness. (Education Code 215)

Any personal information that a student discloses to a licensed or credentialed personnel, shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with any third party, unless he/she has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure is necessary to avert a clear and present danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the student or others. In this case, the licensed or credentialed personnel shall report this information to the Executive Director or designee and the student's parents/guardians. In addition, the school's Executive Director may disclose information of a personal nature to other health care providers for the sole purpose of referring the student for mental health services and/or treatment. (Education Code 49602)

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Executive Director or designee shall ensure student safety by taking the following actions:

1. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary.
2. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency community assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.
3. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and intervenes to take over physical care and supervision.
4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible.

The Executive Director or designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.

The Executive Director or designee shall follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate mental health services as needed. If the parent/guardian does not access treatment for the student, the Executive Director or designee may meet with the parent/guardian to identify barriers to treatment and assist the family in providing follow-up care for the student. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Executive Director or designee shall consider whether he/she is required, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.

Postvention

In the event that a student dies by suicide, the Executive Director or designee shall communicate with the student's parents/guardians to offer condolences, assistance, and resources. In accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Executive Director or designee shall obtain consent from parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to notify other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

The Executive Director or designee shall implement interventions to address the grief of students and staff and to identify those significantly affected by the suicide to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. He/she shall provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information on support services, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the school-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. The school's response shall not sensationalize death by suicide and shall focus on the school's postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the Executive Director or designee shall provide an opportunity for all staff who responded to the incident to debrief and receive support.

Long-term suicide postvention responses, which should be considered include:

1. Important dates (anniversary of death, deceased's birthday, or graduation).
2. Support for siblings, close friends, teachers, and staff.
3. The impact of long-term memorials, which could glamorize suicide or impact emotionally vulnerable students at risk for suicide.

This policy shall be reviewed and revised as indicated, at least annually, in conjunction with community stakeholders.

Board Approved: 8-24-17