

Is Your School Prepared to Manage Suicidal Behavior?

Suicidal behavior (fatal and non-fatal) is one of the most traumatic occurrences with which school personnel may be faced. Advanced planning to prevent youth suicide and to intervene in a crisis can significantly improve the ability of school personnel to respond quickly and effectively and with the least disruption to school routines when suicidal behavior becomes an issue.

While the following is not an exhaustive list, these questions will help guide you to develop necessary school protocols suggested to address suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Administrative Questions:

Prevention

1. Does the school have an up-to-date crisis response plan?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
2. Does the crisis response plan have solid administrative support?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
3. Does the crisis plan have written protocols on how to manage suicidal (student and/or staff) behavior? Attempt on campus? Attempt off campus?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
4. Have crisis team members been identified? Are individuals from both the school and the community involved on the crisis team?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
5. Are crisis team members provided with training?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
6. Are substitute crisis team members identified in case regular members are not available due to absence, conference attendance, vacation, etc.?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

7. Would the crisis team be able to support multiple schools in the event of a murder/suicide situation? (i.e. father murders all siblings attending several schools and then takes his own life)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
8. Do crisis team members have copies of school floor plans for their use and/or to provide to local law enforcement, if needed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
9. Does the crisis team meet and practice on a regular basis?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
10. Are copies of the school crisis plan readily accessible to all school personnel?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
11. Is there an established method for disseminating protocols that includes who should receive them? Is there a plan for providing new staff with the protocols?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
12. Has school administration provided clear direction about the legal rights and obligations of administrators, faculty, and staff in assisting with a suicidal student?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
13. Is someone designated to track the number of suicides, suicide attempts, and/or referrals for suicidal behavior?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
14. Has a policy for maintaining confidentiality of sensitive student information been created and disseminated to all school personnel?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
15. Does the school have a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the local crisis service provider(s) outlining the services to be provided to the school system such as risk assessments, crisis management, and/or debriefing school staff in the aftermath of a crisis? Does the agreement include debriefing parents and community members in the event of a suicide?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

16. Does the MOA include guidelines for how the school receives feedback on the outcome of the referrals that are made?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
17. Have school administrators, faculty and staff received education and training in suicide prevention?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
18. Has an effective student suicide prevention education program been incorporated into the Comprehensive Health Education Program? Does the program focus on building help seeking skills? (Note: the student component should only be introduced after protocols have been established, MOAs are in place, staff education has occurred and key staff identified as those who can help with suicidal behavior.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
19. Has a discussion with law enforcement occurred so that you know what to expect from the local law enforcement agency in the event of a crisis in school buildings or on school grounds?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
20. Has the traffic pattern to and from the school been reviewed with emergency response personnel?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
21. Has a communication plan been developed in the event that all incoming phone lines are jammed by parent calls about the safety of their children?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

Intervention

22. Are key people identified within each building as contacts to help when suicidal behavior occurs?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
23. Has someone been designated to contact the parent/guardian when suicide risk is suspected?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

24. Have procedures been developed if the parent/guardian is unreachable?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
25. Have steps been developed to encourage parents to get help for their children including the removal of lethal means? If the parent refuses?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
26. Does the school have a system to alert staff of an emergency while school is in session?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
27. Are there protocols concerning how to help a student re-enter school after an absence or hospitalization for mental illness including suicidal behavior?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
28. Have procedures been developed to support/address the needs of students who are exhibiting high risk behaviors such as substance abuse, depression, deliberate self-harm, etc.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

Postvention

29. Do the protocols include a section about working with the media? Has a spokesperson been designated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
30. In the event of a suicide, are there established methods for identifying close friends/other vulnerable students and plan to support them? Does this include students at other buildings?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
31. Has a plan been developed that explicitly details what to do following a suicidal crisis to avoid copycat behaviors?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
32. Are there clear parameters around the school's role following any student/staff death (for any reason) that take into consideration the fact that following a suicide, whole-school and/or permanent memorials are NOT recommended?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

Staff Related Questions

1. Has ALL staff received training about suicide prevention?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
2. Has ALL staff been provided with the school protocols?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
3. Have individuals (and back-ups) been identified as contacts for when suicidal behavior occurs? Does everyone in the building know who the contact people are?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
4. Does staff know what to do in the event that they are first responder (anyone who comes upon or hears about a suicide event)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
5. Have the confidentiality guidelines been provided and discussed with ALL staff?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
6. Has staff been taught to pay attention to student work/messages that focus on death or suicide? (i.e. artwork, doodling, homework, term papers, journal entries, notes, etc.)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
7. Will teachers receive feedback on students whom they refer for an evaluation of suicidal risk?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
8. Do school personnel understand that it is not their responsibility to assess the seriousness of a situation but that all suicidal behavior must be taken seriously and reported using the school protocols?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
10. Has staff been informed about what to do if there is any reason to suspect a weapon is present/readily available?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
11. Are procedures in place to brief and debrief staff in the event of a crisis?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

Parent Related Questions

1. Are opportunities provided for parents to learn about suicide prevention?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
2. Are there efforts to actively communicate with parents about risk factors, warning signs, and the importance of restricting access to lethal means?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
3. Have parents been told what the school is doing to prevent and address the issue of suicide, what will be done if their son or daughter is thought to be at risk of suicide, and what will be expected of them?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
4. Is a list of community resources and agencies provided to parents if they are concerned about their son or daughter being suicidal?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:

Student Related Questions

1. Are students educated about suicide and how to help a troubled friend? Does the education including practicing an intervention?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
2. Do students know whom to go to in the school if they are worried about a suicidal friend?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments:
3. Are behavioral health services readily available to youth?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Need to consider <input type="checkbox"/> Comments: