

FILE: JHH

MEDFORD AREA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

DATE ADOPTED: May, 1986

FILE SECTOR: STUDENTS

DATE REVISED: March 19, 1990

POLICY TITLE: SUICIDE PREVENTION

DATE REVISED: December 19, 2002

DATE REVISED: June 19, 2008

DATE REVISED: June 18, 2015

The Medford Area Public School District Board of Education recognizes that suicide and suicide tendencies among youth are continuing problems in the schools and communities of the nation. The board also recognizes that it is not a problem that it can deal with alone. Communication and cooperation within the school district and between the home, school, and community is crucial.

The board establishes this policy in an effort to take positive steps toward preventing childhood/adolescent suicides and to outline procedures by which students can receive professional help and support in the following three areas:

1. Prevention. To develop within the Medford Area Public School System a suicide prevention curriculum and to provide all staff members with basic information about, and a recognition of, the signs of suicidal behavior.
2. Intervention. To take affirmative action when an immediate referral is warranted and to understand the emergency procedures when a referral is made;
3. Postvention. To provide for the needs of students after an act of suicide has taken place.

CROSS REFERENCE: EBCA, JHG, JHH-R, JO, JOB, & Safety Response Plan

LEGAL REFERENCE: Sections 118.01(2)(d)7, 118.126, & 118.295 Wis. Stats.

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In the area of prevention, the Medford Area Public School District, via Student Services (SS) (counselors, nurse, psychologist, etc.), will inform district staff on a regular basis concerning the warning symptoms of and the correct response to a suicidal threat or gesture. Information will be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s) about the warning signals. The school district will include suicide prevention units at appropriate levels of the regular curriculum.

In the area of intervention, the following procedures apply. When any staff member has a suspicion of possible suicidal behavior, they will make an immediate referral to a member of SS. When dealing with suspected suicidal behavior, confidentiality must be secondary to the concern for the student's life. Action must be taken immediately.

Upon receiving the referral the SS member will notify the appropriate principal of the referral and will see the indicated student. After talking with the student, the SS member will confer with another member of SS to determine if a serious suicidal threat does, in fact, exist. If, in the professional judgment of the two SS members, it is determined that a serious suicidal threat does exist, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student will be notified as soon as possible. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) do not respond, and if for that or any other reason the SS member suspects neglect or abuse could be involved, human services will be notified in accordance with state law and board policy. If the SS member is not able to control the student and feels the student may harm him/herself, the SS member should contact the police. The student must remain in actual physical custody of a member until a transfer to the parent, police, or human services can be made. The building principal is to be kept informed of all steps in this procedure.

If a student attempts suicide during the school day, the building principal must be notified as soon as possible. The nurse must be contacted. If a student is in possession of a weapon, the police must be contacted. Decisions about how to transport a student to the hospital will be left to the best judgment of the nurse and/or building principal. If a student is to be transported in a private vehicle, one staff member in addition to the driver must accompany the student to the hospital. If possible, this staff member should have CPR or First Aid training. A list of all staff members having such training should be kept by each building principal. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be notified as soon as possible.

In the area of postvention, the school district will handle the aftermath of a student's suicide in the following manner:

1. A list of mental health personnel (crisis team) who can help students in their immediate reaction to the suicide will be developed and updated on a regular basis. Potential members of this group might include SS members, human services staff members, clergy members, county nursing staff, morticians, physicians, nurses, and etc. These volunteers would be willing to come into the school on a crisis basis to work with individual students or in the classrooms following a suicide.
2. These crisis team members, when needed, will be contacted as early as possible, and should meet before they make contact with students. If necessary they will go into the first hour classes of the building where the suicidee has been a student. Assignments for the crisis team will be determined by the crisis team coordinator and/or the building principal.
3. The crisis team would meet with teachers briefly before school to review with them the facts surrounding the suicide and to answer questions about how to deal with students during the school day. Teachers will be informed of a resource room staffed with volunteer mental health personnel which will be available to students/staff throughout the day. Teachers will make their students aware of this option. Any student who wishes to go to the resource room may go. However, teachers must notify the resource room of any students who are leaving to come to that room.
4. Individual members of the crisis team may go into first hour classes. They would spend whatever portion of the first hour is necessary discussing the suicide with the students. They will also inform the students of the existence of a resource room available to the students throughout the day. A member of the crisis team may attend the suicidee's classes during the day to help the teachers if needed.
5. The crisis team should reconvene after first hour to share their concerns. They will refer any individual students about whom they are concerned to the resource room.
6. Some of the members of the crisis team may meet with the teachers over lunch for the purpose of answering their questions and for receiving referrals about individuals who are experiencing difficulty in handling the suicide. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of any student who is having difficulty with the suicide will be contacted.
7. If there are sufficient numbers of crisis team volunteers available, they may visit the schools in the district that same day to discuss the suicide with staff and to go into classrooms where staff feels there is a need to deal with student's questions or reactions. The determination as to what needs to be done in other buildings of the district will be made by the crisis team coordinator and the building principals.
8. Available members of the crisis team will meet with teachers again at the end of the school day to address their own personal concerns and/or their concerns about individual students.

9. Any contact with/to the media shall be made to the district administrator or his/her designee. An effort should be made to encourage the media to downplay the suicide.
10. Within a reasonable amount of time the crisis team coordinator should consider arranging a meeting for parent(s)/guardian(s) to deal with questions about how to work with their children.
11. In the event of a failed suicide attempt, SS will meet and confer about how to handle the student's reentry into school and ongoing intervention. The mental health worker from human services who is in charge of the case should also be involved in the meeting. A member of SS shall keep close contact with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the community agency treating the student to assure a coordinated approach in helping the student. Additionally, this staff person shall maintain records of all actions taken by the school, and perform a monitoring and follow-up function after the student returns to class. Teachers involved with the student should be given information to assist them in appropriately dealing with the student.

When any outside agency is to be utilized, a release of information form should be signed by the parent and student to allow a two-way flow of information between the school and the community agency.

12. Other crises involving the death of a student or staff member may be handled using the above procedures. The crisis team coordinator and/or the building principal shall make this determination.