

Policy

SUICIDE AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

The Somerville Board of Education believes the physical and mental well-being of all students must be maintained as a prerequisite to achievement through the formal educational process. The board recognizes that depression, self-destructive behavior and suicide are problems of increasing severity among children and adolescents. Students who experience severe family crises; drug and alcohol abuse (see board policy 5131.6 Substance Abuse and 5131.7 Weapons and Dangerous Instruments); suicide ideations, gestures, and attempts; and severe emotional traumas are at-risk. A student under severe stress cannot benefit fully from the educational program and may pose a threat to him or herself or others.

The board directs all school personnel to be alert to students who exhibit signs of potential self-destructive behavior or who threaten or attempt suicide. The school psychologist or his or her designee shall provide training to staff for the identification of the signs/symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation; the connection of depression and suicidal behavior to harassment, intimidation and bullying; and school reporting procedures. The goal of training shall be to instruct school staff, parents/guardians, and students to:

- A. Understand the causes of self-destructive behavior and suicide;
- B. Recognize the early warning signs of self-destructive and suicidal behavior;
- C. Learn how to help in a suicidal crisis;
- D. Identify community resources and procedures that can help a self-destructive or suicidal person;
- E. Cope with the aftermath of such a tragedy.

Any suspicion of the signs/symptoms and the report of signs/symptoms from another student or staff member should be taken with the utmost seriousness and reported immediately to the school psychologist and building principal, who will notify the student's parent/guardian and other professional staff members in accordance with administrative regulations.

The superintendent or his or her designee shall ensure that a continuing cooperative affiliation is made with local community mental health agencies to assist in following the procedures in the event the necessary professional expertise is not adequately available within the school district during an emergency of this nature.

The student's parents/guardians shall be notified immediately of incidents or suspicion of potential self-destructive behavior. The cooperation of parents/guardians shall be sought for immediate intervention. If the parent/guardian is unwilling to cooperate, the school administration and/or crisis team shall contact appropriate agencies to request intervention on the student's behalf. In cases of child abuse or neglect, school personnel are required to contact the Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

The school psychologist will be consulted for appropriate evaluation and/or recommendation for independent medical or psychiatric services for a potentially at-risk student. In the event that the parent or guardian objects to the recommended evaluation or indicates an unwillingness to cooperate in the best interests of the student, school personnel should contact the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency to request that the agency intervene on the student's behalf.

The superintendent will, in consultation with appropriate teaching staff members and mental health organizations, develop and implement a program as necessary for students exhibiting self-destructive

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behaviors in grades K through 12. The program will address problems of depression, help students toward alternative ways of resolving stressful situations, and encourage students to help one another.

Suicide Awareness

Students at all grade levels shall receive instruction in suicide prevention as part of the district health and physical education curriculum and consistent with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education.

Every teaching staff member shall complete at least two hours of instruction in suicide prevention as part of the required professional development. The instruction shall be provided by a licensed health care professional with experience in mental health issues, in each professional development period. The instruction in suicide prevention shall include information on the relationship between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying and information on reducing the risk of suicide in students who are members of communities identified as having members at high risk of suicide.

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 Readopted:

Key Words

Crisis, Self-Mutilation, Self Destructive, Suicide, Depression, Cutting

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 2A:62A-23 to 26 AED emergency medical services, 1999 statute
N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111 et seq. Instruction in Suicide Prevention
See particularly:
N.J.S.A. 18A:6-113 Instruction in suicide prevention in public school curriculum
N.J.S.A. 18A:16-6, -6.1 Indemnity of officers and employees against civil actions
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.6 et seq. Parents Right to Conscience Act of 1979
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-1 Employment of medical inspectors, optometrists and nurses; salaries; terms; rules
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-3 Lectures to teachers
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-5 Method of examination; notice to parent or guardian
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-6 In general
N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-1 et seq. Substance Abuse
N.J.S.A. 44:6-2 Maintenance by boards of education of clinics for indigent children
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1 et seq. Programs to Support Student Development
See particularly:
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1, -1.3, -1.4, -2.1, -2.3, -2.4
N.J.A.C. 6A:26-12.1 et seq. Operation and Maintenance of School Facilities
See particularly:
N.J.A.C. 6A:26-12.3

Possible

Cross References: *1410 Local units
 *3510 Operation and maintenance of plant
 *3516 Safety
 *4112.4/4212.4 Employee health

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*4131/4131.1	Staff development; inservice education/visitations/conferences
*5125	Student records
*5131	Conduct/discipline
*5131.1	Harassment, intimidation and bullying
*5131.6	Substance abuse
*5131.7	Weapons and dangerous instruments
*5141.1	Accidents
*5141.2	Illness
*5141.21	Administering medication
*5142	Student safety
*5145.11	Questioning and apprehension
*5145.12	Search and seizure
*6142.4	Physical education and health

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.