Suicide Prevention and Postvention

1. Purpose

The HomeTech Charter School in recognition of the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students, to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, hereby adopts this policy. This policy corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

2. Prevention Education

Students will receive age appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self or others. Students are taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. Lessons will contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Lessons are taught by teachers. Students who are in need of intervention will be referred to the counselor for screening and recommendations.

3. Staff Training and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All staff are expected to exercise sound professional judgment, err on the side of caution and demonstrate extreme sensitivity throughout any crisis situation. All school personnel should be informed of the signs of youth depression/suicide.

Any staff member who is originally made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm, that is written, drawn, spoken or threatened, will immediately notify the principal or their designee. Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. Thus, in cases of life threatening situations a student’s confidentiality will be waived. The school’s suicide crisis response procedures will be implemented.
4. Suicide Crisis Response Procedures Suicide Threat

**Definition** – A suicide threat is a verbal or non-verbal communication that the individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior.

The staff member who learns of the threat will locate the individual and arrange for or provide constant adult supervision.

The above-mentioned staff member will immediately inform the principal/designee.

The principal/designee will involve student services/counseling staff.

The appropriate staff or approved agency provider will determine risk and intervention needed by interviewing the student, and gathering appropriate supportive documentation from teachers or others who witnessed the threat.

The principal/designee will:
Contact the parent/guardian, apprise them of the situation and make recommendations. Most often it is the person conducting the interview who contacts the parent/guardian.

Put all recommendations in writing to the parent/guardian.

Mail the recommendation through certified mail if there is any question or doubt of the parent/guardian receiving the recommendations.

Maintain a file copy of the letter in a secure and appropriate location.

If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the principal/designee will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.

If the parent refuses to cooperate, and there is any doubt regarding the child’s safety, the school employee who directly witnessed the threat will pursue an involuntary mental health assessment by calling Paradise Police, and ask for a delegate. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action.

If an involuntary mental health assessment is granted, the first-hand witness will need to be the petitioner, with support from appropriate school staff.

If the delegate authorizes a mental health assessment, then the delegate will authorize transportation to the assessment.

Involve the counselor for follow-up and support.
Suicidal Act or Attempt on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity

Suicidal act (also referred to as suicide attempt) – a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill himself or herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

The first district employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow school emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.

1. A staff member must notify the principal/designee.
2. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
3. Principal/designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
4. Principal/designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
5. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the principal/designee will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.
6. Principal/designee will meet with parents and student prior to a student’s return to school.
7. The counselor will promptly follow up with any students who might have witnessed the attempt, and contact their parents/guardians.
8. Media representatives should be referred to the appropriate school spokesperson [e.g., Superintendent, or Communications Coordinator]. School staff should make no statements to the media.

Suicide Act or Attempt Not on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity but Reported to a School Employee

Follow the procedures outlined under Suicide Threat.

Suicide of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity

Definition - Suicide – death caused self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Note: The coroner’s or medical examiner’s office must first confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of death. Schools must adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.
When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the principal/designee will confer with Paradise Police and promptly implement crisis response procedures as outlined in the school's Safe Schools Plan. These actions may include the following:

The first district employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow school emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.

A staff member must notify the principal/designee.

Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.

Principal/designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.

Principal/designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.

The principal or his/her designee will:

1. Verify and obtain as much factual information as possible via school police, the parent/guardian, or others who may have the facts depending on circumstances.
2. Assemble the response team using school-based and community resources and the school's service providers; use the procedures outlined in the Safe Schools Plan if in the evening or over the weekend to insure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
3. Do not describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents, staff or students unless you have written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner.
4. Promptly collect and safeguard the student's belongings. Consult with family members and determine a mutually agreeable date and time in private, to return these belongings.
5. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred using if school has already begun, followed by a staff meeting at the conclusion of the day. If the death occurred in the evening, convene a staff meeting prior to the start of school the next day. Outline procedures that will be followed per the School Safety Plan.
6. Designate space for all postvention activities.
7. Once obtained, provide funeral arrangements and related details to students, staff via Main Office and parents.
8. Refer staff to counselor for additional support.
9. Prepare and send a parent information letter home with students following the school’s protocol and guidelines.
10. Prioritize classrooms and students who will need immediate attention and connect them with the counselor or other appropriate resources as determined by principal/designee.
11. Refer media requests to school spokesperson.
12. Do not disclose any information or details to the media.
13. Meet with all staff at the end of the day or days during crisis management activities to insure the exchange of important information, as well as to insure communication and further planning of activities.
14. Check in periodically with the family, staff and students to insure that everyone is supported as much as feasible with the context of the school setting.
15. Thank those who assisted in the postvention. Don’t forget to include the faculty, ancillary staff, crisis team and any outside agency or community folks.

5. Actions to Avoid
   1. Do not announce the death of anyone over the public address system.
   2. Do not hold an assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss suicide.
   3. Avoid canceling school, classes or preplanned activities unless absolutely necessary; students find comfort in following their normal routine when they are under stress, within reason. Discuss with superintendent prior to proceeding with any cancellations.

6. Memorials

It is recognized that grieving individuals need a variety of opportunities to personally express their emotions and reactions to this type of death. Recommendations and ideas for a memorial should be taken into consideration and discussed with the counselor prior to being implemented. Memorials must be carefully and tastefully planned, considering a broad range of responses. A variety of activities may in fact occur to celebrate positive remembrances, and these expressions often vary.