

# **St. Louis Language Immersion School**

## **Suicide Policy**

Our policy is thoughtfully modeled from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), as well as from a model policy created by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Trevor Project. Our policy is in compliance with Section 170.048 RSMo.

This policy covers the actions that take place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored events, on school buses, and at school sponsored events off campus where staff are present. This policy applies to both our Elementary and Middle School students and will address suicidal or high risk behaviors that happen outside the school as well.

### **Purpose**

As an elementary and middle school, we are uniquely positioned to be able to notice signs and symptoms of risk for suicide at an early age. This policy outlines our protocol to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. The purpose of this policy is one part of our efforts to protect and support the health and well-being of all of our students.

### **Prevention**

**Staff:** Annually, all staff will receive training by a qualified professional about suicide including but not limited to the identifying students of concern, warning signs, risk factors, protective factors, response protocol, and available resources. This may be an individual training or a designated section of a broader training on mental health.

The school will identify qualified persons to create a Crisis Response Team. This select group of qualified staff members will annually review this policy to ensure that all staff is trained properly. The Crisis Response Team will also review this policy annually to ensure that all team members are appropriately trained and prepared for assessment, intervention, and postvention. The counselor and/or social work Crisis Team member will maintain a list of mental health resources that are available to staff, families, and students for any level of mental health concerns.

**Students:** Annually, as a part of their health curriculum, students will receive developmentally appropriate information about suicide and/or mental health.

**Guardian(s):** Access to this policy will be included in the student handbook as well accessed online. St. Louis Language Immersion School make resource materials available to parents on the signs and symptoms of risk for suicide as well as resources for family support. It is highly suggested that any caretaker who notices signs or symptoms of mental health concern contact the school for support. At St. Louis Language Immersion School, we strive to build close connections with our students as well as their caregivers and to be a safe place for people to turn during difficult times.

### **Assessment and Intervention**

Note: Concerns about suicide are **NOT** confidential and may be revealed to parents, guardians, staff, and/or other authorities as needed to maintain the safety and well-being of the person of concern.

Identification: Student may self-identify or be identified by any staff member or other student. Students may be considered at risk because of statements, actions, drawings, writing, and/or any other obvious risk factors. Reports of concern because of statements, behavior, and/or attempts outside of school will follow the same protocol beginning at the time of awareness. There may be many other reasons a staff member may report concern and all concerns will be taken seriously, assessed, and intervention will occur to whatever degree is deemed necessary by a mental health professional. If a student is identified because there has been an incident of self-harm and/or a suicidal attempt at school, first aid will be rendered until, if necessary, professional medical treatment and/or transportation is received. Other students who witnessed the incident or may be impacted will be offered mental health support as needed.

Assessment: If a student is identified as being at risk they will be monitored until they can be seen by a school employed mental health professional (MHP) within the same day. If a mental health professional (MHP) is not available that day then another Crisis Team member will fill this role and a mental health professional will follow up as soon as possible. For moderate or high risk, it may be determined by administration and/or guardian(s) that student needs to be seen right away and an organization such as, but not limited to, Behavioral Health Response (314-469-4908) may be called. In extreme cases police/911 will be called.

Intervention: Guardian(s) will *be immediately notified* if through the assessment their student is determined to be at risk. If staff determine in their best professional judgement that contacting guardian(s) may endanger the safety or well-being of the student then staff **will identify an alternate contact who can advocate for the child.** A plan will be created to address the concerns based on the assessment. The plan may include the guardian, staff, and/or a mental health professional. The plan will include interventions such as, but limited to, awareness of signs/symptoms, regular counseling, in-patient treatment, and/or re-entry to school. The school will request permission to speak with other agencies involved to ensure child safety and a coordinated care team for student.

A guardian may also choose to develop their own plan with their preferred mental health professional. If guardian(s) use their own resource, the school may request documentation, a signed release of information between the school and MHP, and/or a copy of a safety plan. If a guardian does not seek intervention for the student and there is any doubt regarding student safety, law enforcement or Children's Division (Abuse & Neglect Hotline) **will be contacted.**

### **Post-Intervention**

If the school community is impacted by suicidal behavior or a death by suicide, the Crisis Team will confer to create an action plan that may include all or some of the following as well as any other actions deemed necessary:

- disclosing about the death to media, guardians, staff, and/or students as appropriate
- making supports available to staff and students as deemed necessary

- consulting with staff to identify students who are more likely to be significantly affected and to determine appropriate supports
- special consideration will be given to reducing contagion by avoiding sensationalizing suicide and focusing the community message on resources available and preventing future suicides.