



Book	Board of Trustees Policy
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Title	Youth Suicide Prevention and Awareness
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**Agora Cyber Charter School
1018 W 8th Ave
King of Prussia PA 19406**

Board of Trustees

Youth Suicide Prevention and Awareness

Purpose:

The Board is committed to protecting the health and welfare of its students and maintaining a safe school environment. Therefore, Agora Cyber Charter School shall work diligently to educate school personnel and students about how to reduce the risk of suicide, recognize warning signs and implement appropriate response and intervention.

Authority:

In compliance with state law and regulations, this policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm, or where a student actually harms himself or herself, whether on school property, at any school-sponsored activity on-or off-campus, or on any public or school-sponsored vehicle transporting students to or from a school or a school-sponsored activity. The policy also applies following a student's threat, attempt to commit suicide, or actual suicide that does not occur on school property or during a school-sponsored activity, but that is reported to any school personnel.

Publication:

This policy shall be disseminated to all school personnel, students and parents or guardians. The policy shall be posted on the school website.

Definitions:

At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Chief School Administrator-shall mean the superintendent of a school district or joint school district, the chief executive officer of a charter school, regional charter school or cyber charter school, and/or the executive director of an intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school.

Crisis Response Team shall include, but may not be limited to, the administrators, guidance counselors, the school nurse, social worker, and school resource officers, and/or other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), as designated, and may include other members as deemed appropriate by the chief school administrator/school entity. Community mental agency resources may be called for assistance to be a part of the team.

Expressed Suicidal Thoughts or Intentions shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die, but has not acted on the behavior.

Prevention refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.

Protective Factors shall refer to characteristics (biological, psychological, and social) that reduce risk and the likelihood of the individual developing a mental illness.

Resilience shall refer to an individual's innate ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes.

Risk Factors shall mean the personal or environmental characteristics associated with suicide. People affected by one or more of these risk factors have a greater probability of suicidal behavior. These can include but are not limited to the following:

- Behavioral or mental health issues or disorders
- Previous suicide attempts or self-injury
- Hopelessness/low self esteem
- Loneliness, social isolation or alienation/lack of belonging
- Poor problem solving or coping skills
- Impulsivity/risk taking/ recklessness
- Adverse/stressful life circumstances
- Gender identity/sexual orientation differences
- Disciplinary issues, including legal or school-related
- Bullying/cyberbullying
- Physical, sexual, or psychological abuse
- Exposure to peer or family suicide
- Substance abuse

School Connectedness shall mean the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

School Personnel shall refer to all individuals having active responsibility for care and supervision of students as well as those individuals serving in a supporting role, in the school, including, but not limited to administrators, teachers, support personnel and office staff.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with an intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicidal Act or Suicide Attempt shall mean a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill him/herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

Warning Signs are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future. These can include but are not limited to the following:

1. Talking about or making plans for suicide
2. Expressing hopelessness about the future
3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress
4. Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:
 - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
 - Recent increased agitation or irritability
 - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
 - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)

Suicide Awareness

A. Education of All School Personnel

All school personnel as defined above shall receive information about the school's protocols for suicide awareness, prevention, and response, including, in particular, information about recognizing students exhibiting suicidal ideation or the risk factors or warning signs for suicide, and responsibility and procedures for reporting students at risk.

As part of the school's professional development plan, professional educators who serve students in grades Kindergarten through twelve shall participate in four hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five years.

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers and family coaches.

B. Education of Students

Students in grades Kindergarten (K) through twelve (12) shall receive age-appropriate lessons in health education or other classes as applicable on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, as well as help-seeking strategies for self and others.

Student grades 6-12 education may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Information about suicide awareness and prevention
- Help-seeking behaviors that promote a climate encouraging peer referral and school connectedness
- Addressing the problems that can lead students to suicidal ideation, including bullying and cyberbullying, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health issues

Suicide Prevention:

A. Reporting Students At-Risk

A Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall be designated. Administration shall notify the employee of his/her appointment and provide a list of associated duties. His/her identity and contact information shall be published to all school personnel, students, and parent(s) or guardian(s).

All school personnel as described above shall be responsible for reporting any student deemed at risk for suicide to the appropriate school authority as per identified crisis procedure. A student at risk of suicide may be identified through a threat of, or through any attempt of, self-harm that is written, drawn, spoken or otherwise communicated.

The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be contacted by the Suicide Prevention Coordinator or his/her designee. In the event that the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) cannot be reached, emergency responders will be contacted. No student who has been reported as at risk for suicide shall be promised confidentiality.

If any school personnel becomes aware of a student at risk for suicide after regular school hours, the school personnel must contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 and send a written report to the Suicide Prevention Coordinator on the following school day.

Suicide Intervention:**A. Risk Assessment**

When a student is reported as at risk for suicide, the Suicide Prevention Coordinator or a Principal or their respective designee to whom the report was made, may take the following alternative actions as appropriate:

1. Begin the risk assessment process
2. Contact the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) who shall agree to arrange further risk assessment and intervention
3. Discuss with the parent(s) or guardian(s) the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for the student at risk for suicide
4. Provide the parent(s) or guardian(s) with contact information for mental health service providers in the community to whom students can be referred for further assistance and/or risk assessment, including, but not limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals and facilities, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and primary care health providers.

B. Intervention

In compliance with state regulations (22 Pa. Code 12.12), information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parent(s) or guardian(s), school administrators, or other appropriate authority when the health, safety, or welfare of the student or other persons is at risk.

In no case shall a "Student Safety Contract," "No Harm Contract," or similar document be the sole intervention.

C. Documentation

Documentation of the intervention alternatives adopted shall be communicated to the Suicide Prevention Coordinator or his/her designee within 48 hours. If the student is determined to be a danger to him/herself or others, medical documentation may be required for return to regular school activities.

Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt:

The first school personnel to be made aware of a student suicide or suicide attempt must follow the school's crisis response procedures, and shall immediately notify the Principal or his/her designee.

The school Principal or his/her designee shall immediately notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the affected student(s).

Resources

A comprehensive list of resources related to youth suicide awareness and prevention is available on the Department of Education website at www.education.pa.gov.

Other resources include: The PA Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative, at <http://payspi.org>