

## PUPIL SUICIDE

The following regulations are established for guidance of staff members in recognizing the pupil who contemplates suicide, in responding to threatened or attempted suicide, and in preventing contagion when a pupil commits suicide. Because a prompt response may be essential to a pupil's life, the designation of a district position in these regulations includes the person who holds that position and, if the position holder is absent or unavailable, the person temporarily charged with the responsibilities of the position.

### **A. Recognition of Potential Suicide**

All school personnel, both teaching staff members and support staff members, shall be alert to any sign that a pupil may be contemplating suicide. Such signs include, but are not necessarily limited to, a pupil's:

1. Overt suggestion, regardless of its context, that he/she is considering or has considered suicide or has worked out the details of a suicide attempt;
2. Evidence of preparation of a will, intention to dispose of his/her effects and belongings, or otherwise get life "in order";
3. Obsession with death or afterlife;
4. Possession of a weapon or other means of suicide or obsession with such means;
5. Sense of hopelessness or unrelieved sadness;
6. Lethargy or despondency, or, conversely, a tendency to become more impulsive or aggressive than usual;
7. Drop in academic achievement, slacking off of energy and effort, or inability to focus on studies;
8. Isolation from others by loss of friends, withdrawal from friends, lack of companionship, or family disintegration;
9. Preoccupation with nonexistent physical ills;
10. Loss of weight, appetite, and/or sleep;
11. Substance abuse; and

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION  
HOWELL TOWNSHIP

PUPILS

12. Loss of economic resources.

**NOTE:** These signs in isolation do not necessarily constitute an at risk situation.

## **B. Response to Potential Suicide**

### **Level One**

A staff member observes behaviors or warning signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk to engage in a suicidal act:

1. The school staff member shall immediately notify the building Principal/designee and/or a member of the Crisis Management Team member in the building (school psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselor or student assistance coordinator)
2. The member of the Crisis Management Team shall meet with the pupil to determine the extent of the problem. If available, more than one Crisis Management Team member may meet with the pupil to discuss findings and recommendations. The Crisis Management Team member(s) shall determine the potential of the threat by directly questioning the pupil, without mincing words, about:
  - a. Whether any suicide plans have been made, how detailed the plans are, and whether any preliminary actions have been taken,
  - b. The pupil's feelings of hopelessness and the length of time the pupil has had such feelings,
  - c. The pupil's thoughts of suicide and how persistent and strong those thoughts are, and
  - d. Whether the pupil has considered alternative courses of action to resolve his/her problems.

After gathering information, the Crisis Management Team member(s) team shall determine the life-threatening risk of the situation based on the pupil's signs of possible suicide and the pupil's responses to questioning.

3. If in the judgment of the Crisis Management Team member(s) there is a serious possibility of bodily harm, the response shall follow the procedures outlined in Level Two below.

# Regulation

No. 5340

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION  
HOWELL TOWNSHIP

PUPILS

4. The Crisis Management Team member (s) shall inform the building Principal of the outcome of the meeting with the pupil.
5. If the in the judgment of the Crisis Management Team member(s) the possibility of bodily harm is not imminent, the pupil's parent/guardian will be contacted by telephone immediately following the assessment. The concerns regarding the pupil are to be communicated to the parent/guardian. Referrals to licensed mental health professionals or agencies will be provided to the parent/guardian for further consultation if the parent/guardian elects to do so.
6. Documentation shall be completed and filed appropriately.

## Level Two

A pupil has verbalized or put in writing his/her intent to engage in a suicidal act.

1. The School staff member shall immediately notify the building Principal/designee and/or a member of the Crisis Management Team member in the building (school psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselor or pupil assistance coordinator)
2. The pupil is to be kept under continuous adult supervision until steps 3 to 5 are complete.
3. A member(s) of the Crisis Management Team shall meet with the pupil to determine the extent of the problem.
4. The Crisis Management Team member(s) shall determine the potential of the threat by directly questioning the pupil, without mincing words, about:
  - a. Whether any suicide plans have been made, how detailed the plans are, and whether any preliminary actions have been taken,
  - b. The pupil's feelings of hopelessness and the length of time the pupil has had such feelings,
  - c. The pupil's thoughts of suicide and how persistent and strong those thoughts are, and
  - d. Whether the pupil has considered alternative courses of action to resolve his/her problems.

# Regulation

No. 5340

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION  
HOWELL TOWNSHIP

PUPILS

After gathering information, the Crisis Management Team member(s) team shall determine the life-threatening risk of the situation based on the pupil's signs of possible suicide and the pupil's responses to questioning.

5. The Crisis Management Team member shall contact the pupil's parent/guardian and request that the parent/guardian come to the school immediately for a conference. At the conference, the Crisis Management Team member(s) and the building Principal/designee shall encourage the family to agree on an intervention plan, which shall include immediate emergency psychiatric screening if recommended by the Crisis Management Team member(s). The parent/guardian will notify the building Principal/designee and/or the Crisis Management Team member of the results of the screening and provide written psychiatric medical clearance prior to the pupil's return to school. The Howell Board of Education has the right to seek emergency medical assistance for a pupil when acting in "loco parentis", and as an agent of the parent(s) or guardian(s), and for the welfare of the pupil in cases where the pupil is in physical danger.
6. If it appears that the parent/guardian will not follow this recommendation, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) shall be contact by the Crisis Management Team member to provide for the safety of the pupil.
7. A meeting will be conducted by the Crisis Management Team member(s) involved and the building Principal/designee upon the pupil's return to school. The purpose of this meeting is to verify the pupil's medical clearance to return to school, and to formulate a support plan appropriate to the clinical needs of the pupil.
8. Documentation shall be completed and filed appropriately.

## **Level Three**

If the pupil has attempted a suicidal act:

1. The school staff member shall immediately notify the building administration and the school nurse who will decide whether medical attention is necessary.
2. The Superintendent of Schools will be notified immediately by the building Principal.

# Regulation

No. 5340

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION  
HOWELL TOWNSHIP

PUPILS

3. Building administration or a member of the Crisis Management Team shall contact the pupil's parent/guardian and request the parent/guardian to immediately come to the school for a conference. At the conference, the Crisis Management Team member(s) and the building Principal/designee shall encourage the family to agree on an intervention plan, which shall include immediate emergency psychiatric screening. The parent/guardian will notify the building Principal/designee and/or the Crisis Management Team member of the results of the screening and provide written psychiatric medical clearance prior to the pupil's return to school. The Howell Board of Education has the right to seek emergency medical assistance for a pupil when acting in "loco parentis", and as an agent of the parent(s) or guardian(s), and for the welfare of the pupil in cases where the pupil is in physical danger.
4. If it appears that the parent/guardian will not follow this recommendation, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) shall be contact by the Crisis Management Team member to provide for the safety of the pupil.
5. A meeting will be conducted by the Crisis Management Team member(s) involved and the building Principal/designee upon the pupil's return to school. The purpose of this meeting is to verify the pupil's medical clearance to return to school, and to formulate a support plan appropriate to the clinical needs of the pupil.
6. Documentation shall be completed and filed appropriately.

## **C. Prevention of Suicide Contagion**

1. All district Principals will be promptly informed when a pupil of this district commits suicide.
2. Each Principal will assemble teaching staff members prior to the opening of school to provide them with accurate information, plans for the school day, and guidelines for handling the concerns of pupils.
3. The Principal of the school or building that the victim attended will assign a crisis team from the pupil personnel staff to assist the staff in dealing with the general school situation and any individual problems that may arise.
4. The suicide will not be given prominence by public announcement or a school-wide assembly. School will not be closed in order to permit pupils and staff members to attend the victim's funeral.

# Regulation

No. 5340

BOARD OF  
EDUCATION  
HOWELL TOWNSHIP

PUPILS

5. Teachers will respond to the needs of pupils with as little interruption of the educational program as possible.
6. Pupils will be provided with accurate information and will be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings of loss and their memories of the victim, both good and bad, without penalty.
7. All school personnel shall be especially alert to signs of contemplated suicide among the victim's peers.
8. Teaching staff members, under the direction of the Principal, shall attempt to prevent social contagion by:
  - a. Preventing glorification or romanti-cization of the suicide,
  - b. Helping pupils recognize that suicide is irreversible and permanent and does not truly resolve problems,
  - c. Encouraging pupils to ask probing questions when a fellow pupil suggests suicide and to report such suggestions to a teaching staff member, and
  - d. Discussing ways of handling depression and anxiety without resort to self-destruction.
9. Pupils who were close to the victim, and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s), shall be offered special counseling services and notified of available community mental health services.

Date Adopted: 7/20/05  
Date Revised: