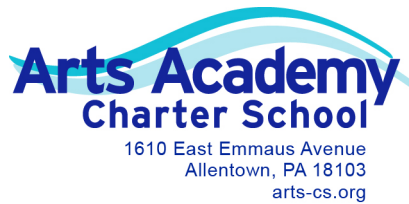


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Board Policy 2.16

SUICIDE AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Purpose

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School Board is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.

Authority

In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of the Arts Academy Charter Middle School's suicide prevention measure, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the Principal, or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the students or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

Definitions

Qualified Mental Health Provider or Other Medical Professional – this term shall mean a physician, licensed psychologist, psychiatrist or other professional who is qualified to make a determination as to whether a student is at-risk for suicide. A “qualified mental health provider or other medical professional” shall not be interpreted to include a school employee.

Emotional or Mental Health Safety Plan – this term shall mean a plan, put in place by the Arts Academy Charter Middle School for all students deemed by a qualified mental health provider or other medical professional, which is reasonably calculated to prevent self-harm by such student during school, on school grounds, and/or at school events.

Guidelines

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School shall notify its employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on the Arts Academy Charter Middle School's website.

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SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize the risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help. Such education shall be provided to all students.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral, and social skills development.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All Arts Academy Charter Middle School employees, but not limited to office staff, administrators, coaches, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

As part of the Arts Academy Charter Middle School's professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades five (5) through eight (8) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years with a minimum of one (1) hour training on an annual basis.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School may provide parents/guardians with resources including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral/mental health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION

The methods of prevention utilized by the Arts Academy Charter Middle School include but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

Suicide Prevention Coordinator

An Arts Academy Charter Middle School Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall be designated by the Executive Director. This may be an existing Arts Academy Charter Middle School employee. The Arts Academy Charter Middle School Suicide Prevention Coordinator shall be responsible for the planning and implementation of this policy.

Early Identification Procedures

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Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs is crucial to the Arts Academy Charter Middle School's suicide prevention efforts. As part of the training programs in grades 5-8 and for staff members, as set forth herein, training will include a discussion of risk factors related to an increased risk of suicide.

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:

- Depression.
- Substance abuse or dependence.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Self injury.

Personal Characteristics:

- Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
- Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
- Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
- Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.

Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:

- Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
- Disciplinary or legal problems.
- Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
- School or work issues.
- Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
- Exposure to peer suicide.

Family Characteristics:

- Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
- Family mental health problems.
- Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
- Parental-Child relationship.

Referral procedures

Any Arts Academy Charter Middle School employee who has identified a student who exhibits one or more of the warning signs, or who otherwise suspects that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student to his or her guidance counselor and/or the Student Assistance Program coordinator.

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Documentation

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indicators that the student may be at risk.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION

The methods of intervention utilized by the Arts Academy Charter Middle School include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in school, suicide attempts outside of school, and student suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

Parents/guardians of a student indentified as potentially being at risk of suicide shall be notified by the student's guidance counselor or suicide prevention coordinator, who shall identify types of mental health service providers to whom the student can be referred for further assessment and procedures. Such mental health service providers may include but are not limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.

Parents/guardians shall be strongly encouraged to notify the Arts Academy Charter Middle School of the outcome of such assessment in the event that the student is deemed to be at risk of suicide or self-harm. The guidance counselor should emphasize to the parent/guardian that such communication is necessary in order to help ensure the student's safety while at school.

Where the Arts Academy Charter Middle School receives information that a student has been deemed to be at risk of suicide by a qualified mental health professional or other provider, the guidance counselor, in conjunction with the SAP team, where possible, and in communication with the principal and nurses and any other individual whom the counselor deems necessary, shall be responsible for overseeing the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan, as defined, above, for the student, addressing the potential need for increased oversight and supervision of the student during school, on school grounds, and at school events, as well as notification of staff members, as deemed appropriate. It is important for the guidance counselor, school administrator, and nurses to ensure that parents understand that this plan is not a substitute for continued intervention and support by a qualified professional and is designed to prevent self-harm in school settings.

If an Arts Academy Charter Middle School employee suspects that the student's potential risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, Arts Academy Charter Middle School staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services, as required by the Child Protective Services Law.

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Students With Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who have attempted suicide, the appropriate team (IEP team for IDEA-eligible students, and Section 504 Team for Section 504-eligible students) shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

If a student is identified as being at risk for suicide or attempts suicide and the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education shall be immediately notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy, which may include reconvening the IEP or Section 504 Team to discuss any necessary modifications to the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

Documentation

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.

The Executive Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

All documentation regarding this process shall remain confidential and shall be maintained by the student's guidance counselor in a file separate from the student's main educational file. This shall not preclude the disclosure of such documentation/information to Arts Academy Charter Middle School employees who have a legitimate educational interest in the information or as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT

The methods of response to a suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by the school include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying and training the Arts Academy Charter Middle School SAP team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each SAP team response member.
3. Notifying students, employees and parents/guardians.
4. Working with families.
5. Responding appropriately to the media.
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The Executive Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on school grounds or during a school-sponsored event.

Re-entry Procedures

A student's excusal from school attendance after a mental health crisis and the student's return to school shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.

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An Arts Academy Charter Middle School employed guidance counselor, principal, or nurse shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to school after a mental health crisis, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to school.

When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated Arts Academy Charter Middle School employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.

The designated Arts Academy Charter Middle School employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into the school community and address any concerns.

A Section 504 evaluation to determine eligibility under Section 504 should be considered for all students returning to Arts Academy Charter Middle School after a mental health crisis.

REPORT PROCEDURES

Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among school staff, parents/guardians, and mental health service providers.

As stated in this policy, Arts Academy Charter Middle School employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.

The suicide prevention coordinator shall provide the Executive Director with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be shared with Arts Academy Charter Middle School employees, as appropriate, including the guidance counselor, school psychologist, nurses, teachers, and other school personnel, as deemed necessary/appropriate.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention shall be maintained by the administrative offices of the Arts Academy Charter Middle School.