

**SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE****Purpose, Intent and Scope**

Through this policy, the District seeks to join with families and the community to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students and the school community. The District understands that suicide prevention is an integral component of this goal, and this policy supports the federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention, to establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt (“postvention”) and to promote access to suicide awareness, prevention and postvention resources.

In implementing this policy and plan, the Merrimack School District:

- Recognizes that physical, mental health, emotional and social health are integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and beyond high school graduation;
- Believes that only through a collaborative, proactive approach can the problem of youth suicide be addressed; and
- Pairs this policy with other policies and laws that support the overall emotional and behavioral health of students.

**District Suicide Prevention Plan and Biennial Review**

The Superintendent (or their designee) has developed a committee to review a District Suicide Prevention Plan (the “Plan”) to include guidelines, protocols, and procedures with the objectives of prevention, risk assessment, intervention and response to youth suicides and suicide attempts. This policy is intended to guide the development and implementation of the coordinated plan to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide; the Plan shall conform to the components required of public schools by RSA 193-J:2.

1. Specific Requirements for Plan Contents: The District Suicide Prevention Plan shall include content relating to:
  - a) Suicide prevention (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, referrals);
  - b) Response to in-or-out-of-school student suicides or suicide attempts (postvention, suicide contagion);
  - c) Student education regarding safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, recognition of risk factors and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide (in oneself and in others) and help-seeking strategies for oneself or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help;

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- d) Training of faculty and staff, designated volunteers, and contracted personnel in youth suicide risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, post-intervention and resources available within the school and community;
  - e) Adherence to confidentiality protocols and statewide Code of Ethics for New Hampshire Educators;
  - f) Designation and identification of trained personnel within each school, to act as points of contact when students are believed to be at an elevated risk of suicide;
  - g) Information regarding state, and community resources for making referrals, crisis intervention, and other related information available for students, parents, faculty, and staff, and school volunteers;
  - h) Dissemination of the Plan or information about the Plan to students, parents, faculty, staff, and school volunteers and contracted personnel;
  - i) Promotion of cooperative efforts between the District and its schools, other school districts and chartered public schools, and community suicide prevention program personnel;
  - j) Such other provisions deemed appropriate to meet the objectives of this policy (e.g., student handbook language, reporting processes, “postvention” strategies, memorial parameters, etc.).
2. **Biennial Review:** No less than once every two years, the Superintendent or their designee, with input and evidence from community health or suicide prevention organizations, and District health and counseling personnel, shall update the District Suicide Prevention Plan. All provisions within this policy and in the Plan shall be evidence-informed.

**Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Building Level Liaisons**

1. District Suicide Prevention Coordinator. The (Director of Student Wellness) shall serve as the appointed District Suicide Prevention Coordinator, who, along with the Superintendent or their designee, shall be responsible for compliance with this policy.

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2. **Building-Level Suicide Prevention Liaison.** The Building Principal or designee shall be designated as the Building-Level Suicide Prevention Liaison and shall serve as the building point-of-contact person when a student is believed to be at an elevated risk for suicide. Any employee who has reason to believe a student is a risk of suicide, or is exhibiting risk factors for suicide, shall report that information to the Building Liaison, who shall, immediately or as soon as possible, establish and implement a response plan with the District Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

**Annual Staff Training**

The Superintendent or their designee shall assure that beginning with the 2020-21 school year, and continuing annually thereafter, all school faculty and staff, including designated volunteers (i.e., all those who have regular contact with students) and contracted personnel receive at least two hours of evidence-informed training in suicide awareness and prevention. Such training may include, but is not limited to, such matters as youth suicide risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, intervention, response procedures, referrals, postvention and resources available within the school and community. The District will allow the use of self-training materials in fulfilling the annual training requirement of this policy, and the District may determine how to both administer the annual training requirements and ensure that such training requirements are met.

**Dissemination**

Student handbooks as well as the District and each school's websites will include:

1. A copy of this policy
2. Information on how to access the District's Suicide Prevention Plan
3. Contact information for the District Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Building Suicide Prevention Liaisons, and
4. Contact information for State and community crisis or intervention referral intervention resources

**Identification Cards**

For each school within the District that serves any students in grades 6 through 12 that issues student identification cards, these identification cards shall include on either side of the cards the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline as follows: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 or 988. This requirement shall apply to first time and replacement cards.

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**Statutory Considerations**

In adopting this policy, it is the intent of the District to fully comply with the provisions of RSA 193-J and to fulfill its statutory role in suicide prevention education as defined by RSA 193-J:2. In doing such, the District does not assume any duty beyond that set forth in RSA 193-J.

**Legal References:**

RSA 193-J Suicide Prevention Education

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed. ED 510: Code of Conduct for NH Educators

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: January 19, 2021

2<sup>nd</sup> Review: February 1, 2021

Adoption: February 15, 2021

**Policy Revision**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: August 14, 2023

2<sup>nd</sup> Review: September 11, 2023

Revision: October 2, 2023