

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Purpose, Intent and Scope

Through this policy, the district seeks to join with families and the community in this important work to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students and the school community, understanding that suicide prevention is an integral component of the trauma-informed System of Care and Learning Supports that promotes student social-emotional health and wellbeing and equitable access to education. This policy supports 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 and mental health are integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and beyond graduation;
- Believes that only through a collaborative, proactive approach can the problem of youth suicide be addressed;
- Pairs this policy with other policies and laws that support the overall emotional and behavioral health of students.

A. District Suicide Prevention Plan and Biennial Review. The superintendent (or “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; and help seeking strategies;

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- d) Training of staff, designated volunteers, and contracted personnel on the issues of 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 referral, crisis intervention, and other related information;
 - h) Dissemination of the Plan or information about the Plan to students, parents, faculty, staff, and school volunteers;
 - i) Promotion of cooperative efforts between the District and its 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 “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.
- B. Annual Staff Training. The Superintendent (or “Designee”) shall assure that beginning with the 2020-21 school year, and continuing annually thereafter, all school building faculty and staff, designated volunteers, and any other personnel who have regular contact with students, including contracted personnel or third-party vendors, receive at least two hours of training in evidence - informed 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, and postvention and local resources.
- C. Dissemination. Student handbooks will include information about the District’s Suicide Prevention Plan and how to access the Plan. The District Suicide Prevention Plan will be made available on the District’s, and each school’s respective websites.

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- D. 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
RSA 193-F: Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention
ED 510: Code of Conduct for NH Educators
School Volunteers Policy (IJOC)

1st Reading: January 19, 2021
2nd Review: February 1, 2021
Adoption: February 15, 2021