

Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention Policy

Overview

One of CTECS' strategic goals is to cultivate and sustain safe, effective, and collaborative schools for staff and students. This includes creating learning environments where students, staff and families feel valued, comfortable and supported. Each of CTECS' schools must connect emotional, social, behavioral, cultural and academic safety across all facets of the school community, school structures and school expectations for all members of its learning community.

In support of these goals, CTECS is committed to nurturing a culture of emotional safety where students feel a sense of belonging and can take academic risks in school. Students who feel accepted, respected, included, supported and understood by other members of their school community perform better academically and have greater motivation to learn. Such students also experience fewer behavioral issues and more positive academic progress, as well as pro-social and emotional development. Creating healthy and supportive connections within a school community strengthens attachment and is a significant factor in student achievement, mental health and emotional well-being.

Nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death among high school students.¹ Moreover, there has been a consistent trend in the past decade of increased suicide attempts among teens across different demographic groups.² The data also indicates that students who experience mental health and substance abuse issues are more likely to complete treatment when interventions are offered in the school setting.³

CTECS' schools are in a unique position to develop effective school climates, including whole school, small group and student specific strategies to help students who may experience suicidal ideation or engage in suicidal behavior. Connecticut state law requires CTECS to adopt a written policy and procedures for dealing with youth suicide prevention and youth suicide attempts.⁴ With these things in mind, CTECS establishes this policy and guidance and re-affirms its collective belief that student safety is the foundation of a great school and student success.

¹ [National Center for Health Statistics, Center for Disease Control & Prevention](#)

² Ivey-Stephenson AZ, Demissie Z, Crosby AE, et al. Suicidal Ideation and Behaviors Among High School Students - Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. [MMWR Suppl. 2020;69\(Suppl-1\):47-55.](#)

³ *Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance from the Field*, (NCSMH September 2019), p. 15.

⁴ Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-221(e).

Plan Components

Preventing and responding to suicidal behavior among students is a complex task requiring collaboration between school, home and community resources. CTECS' Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan consists of this policy and guidelines that shall be issued and periodically revised by the Superintendent or designee. The guidelines shall address the following elements:

- **Prevention Awareness**
Risk factors, warning signs, screening and identification.
- **Intervention and Collaboration**
Development of proactive intervention and collaboration with parents, students, community mental health resources and other stakeholders to develop, expand and assess protocols and procedures, and make referrals.
- **Postvention and Response**
An organized response in the aftermath of a suicide to facilitate the healing of individuals from the grief and stress of suicide loss and/or to mitigate other negative effects of exposure to suicide.
- **Training of Staff and Students**
Training shall include, but not be limited to: prevention awareness (risk factors, warning signs), identification, reporting, interventions, referral, data collection and evaluation of efforts.
- **Evaluation and Data Collection**
Analyze and monitor systemic and individual assistance provided to students.

Implementation Responsibility

Everyone in the school community is needed to implement the Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention Plan, including educators, school and district staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers. At each school, **students, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers** shall be provided with methods to report concerns about students.

The **Superintendent or designee** shall be responsible for the district-level coordination and development of the youth suicide prevention and intervention plan, including periodic revision of the guidelines portion of the plan.

The **building Principal or designee** will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the youth suicide prevention and intervention plan at each school. The **school psychologist** or other appropriate individual in each building will also act as a point of contact in each school for information relating to suicide prevention and intervention.

All staff members are expected to report students they believe to be at-risk for suicide or self-harm to the building Principal or designee.

Guiding Principles for Implementation

In implementing the Prevention and Intervention Plan, CTECS' schools shall give consideration to the following:

- Focus on establishing and consistently maintaining a safe emotional, social, behavioral and academic school climate for all students.
- Address suicidal or high-risk behaviors of students regardless of whether the behavior takes place on or off school grounds.
- Be sensitive to the individual and societal factors that place youth at risk for suicide.
- Work with community stakeholders to develop proactive approaches and activities.
- Incorporate student voice and parent and guardian input.
- Use a holistic approach - including curriculum - to foster positive youth development and resilience.
- Engage in continuous and ongoing training for all staff.
- Match student needs with appropriate professional expertise in order to improve student outcomes.
- Ensure that activities and interventions align with other district policies and obligations (for example, safe school climate plan, DCF mandated reporting, Title IX grievance procedures, crisis response).

Approved by CTECS' Board, January 20, 2021