



ROCKLIN ACADEMY FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

The Governing Board of the Rocklin Academy Family of Schools (“RAFOS”) recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that school personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate referral and/or assistance. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, RAFOS has developed measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing measures and strategies for use by the district, the Superintendent or designee has consulted with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

Prevention and Instruction

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students’ feelings of connectedness with RAFOS and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

RAFOS’s instructional and student support program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience.

The Principal or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, RAFOS’s suicide prevention efforts, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and/or RAFOS and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

RAFOS’s comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students and shall be aligned with the state content standards and curriculum framework. The suicide prevention instructional curriculum shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum at appropriate secondary grades, may include information

about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed, taking into consideration the grade level and age of the students. The suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide.
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping, self-esteem, and resiliency skills.
3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.
4. Identify trusted adults, RAFOS resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth, including those at high risk, such as youth bereaved by suicide; youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, gender identity, or other support services.

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, counselors, and other RAFOS employees who interact with students at the secondary level. The training shall be offered under the direction of a RAFOS counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies.

Materials for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services at the school site and within the community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. Materials also may include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

Staff development shall include research and information related to the following topics:

1. The higher risk of suicide among certain groups, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide; students with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; students who are experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth;
2. Research identifying individual risk factors such as previous suicide attempt(s) or self-harm, history of depression or mental illness, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors;

3. Warning signs that may indicate depression, emotional distress, or suicidal intentions, such as changes in students' personality or behavior and verbalizations of hopelessness or suicidal intent;
4. Protective factors that may help to decrease a person's suicide risk, such as resiliency, problem-solving ability, access to mental health care, and positive connections to family, peers, school, and community;
5. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health;
6. RAFOS and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups;
7. RAFOS procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.
8. Materials approved by RAFOS for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the RAFOS campuses and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.
9. Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

Intervention

Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm, he/she shall promptly notify the principal or school counselor.

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with third parties, the counselor and principal shall report to the student's parents/guardians when he/she has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure is necessary to avert a clear and present danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the student. In addition, the counselor may disclose information of a personal nature to psychotherapists, other health care providers, or the school nurse for the sole purpose of referring the student for treatment. The school counselor or principal may also refer the student to mental health resources at RAFOS or in the community.

RAFOS shall ensure a school employee acts only within the authorization and scope of his/her credential or license. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging a RAFOS employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless he/she is specifically licensed and

employed to do so.

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall receive training that includes identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the principal or designee shall ensure student safety by taking the following actions:

1. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary;
2. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
3. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene;
4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible.
5. Designating specific individuals to be promptly contacted, for example, the RAFOS counselor, psychologist, nurse, other administrator, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.
6. The principal or designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.
7. The Principal or designee shall follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed. If the parent/guardian does not access treatment for the student, the Superintendent or designee may meet with the parent/guardian to identify barriers to treatment and assist the family in providing follow-up care for the student. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Superintendent or designee shall consider whether he/she is required, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.
8. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident.
9. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

For any student returning to school after a mental health crisis, the principal or designee and/or school counselor may meet with the parents/guardians and, if appropriate, with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

Postvention

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on a RAFOS campus, the principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in RAFOS's safety plan. The principal or designee shall communicate with the student's parents/guardians to offer condolences, assistance, and resources. After consultation with the principal or designee and the student's parent/guardian about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. RAFOS staff may receive assistance from RAFOS counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

The principal or designee shall implement procedures to address students' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of further suicides or crises. He/she shall provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the RAFOS-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. RAFOS's response shall not sensationalize suicide and shall focus on the district's postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide, the principal or designee shall provide an opportunity for all staff who responded to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.