



Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy ~ December 8, 2016

The Collegium Charter School Board of Trustees is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its students. 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.

In compliance with state law and regulations (Act 71 of 2014), and in support of Collegium's suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the program supervisor, building principal, and/or other appropriate authorities when the health, welfare, or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

Collegium shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

Collegium shall notify employees, students, and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on Collegium's website.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Collegium students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize suicide risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help. Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All Collegium employees, including but not limited to secretaries, coaches, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, shall receive information regarding suicide risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. As part of the Collegium's professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to guidance counselors, Collegium mental health professionals and school nurses.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

Collegium will provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs, and information about behavioral/mental health resources.

Methods of Prevention

The methods of prevention utilized by Collegium 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 Coordinators

Collegium's Director of Student Services is responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy. School counselors have been designated as the school suicide prevention coordinators for their buildings and to act as the point of contact in each school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation.

Early Identification

Early identification of individuals with one (1) or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to Collegium's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, Collegium employees, students, and parents/guardians will be provided, via the sharing of this policy, with suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

Risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but 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 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.

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:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

Referral Procedures

Any Collegium employee who has identified a student with one (1) or more risk factor (s) or warning sign(s) and who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student to the student's school counselor for further assessment and intervention.

Documentation

Collegium shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

Methods of Intervention

The methods of intervention utilized by Collegium include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts on campus or during Collegium programs, suicide attempts outside of Collegium, and completed suicide. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Procedures for Students at Risk

A Collegium-approved suicide assessment instrument will be used by trained mental health staff such as counselors or psychologists. Parents/guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by Collegium. If Collegium suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, Collegium staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services. Collegium shall identify mental health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance. Mental health service providers may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and primary care providers.

Collegium shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

Students with Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team 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 Student Services shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations, and Board policy.

Documentation

Collegium shall document observations, recommendations, and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians, and mental health service providers.

The Director of Student Services shall develop administrative procedures providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.

Methods of Response to Suicide or Suicide Attempt

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

1. Identifying and training Collegium's response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.

3. Notifying, as appropriate, students, employees, and parents/guardians when there has been a suicide or suicide attempt.
4. Working with families.
5. Responding appropriately to the media.
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The Director of Student Services shall develop administrative procedures with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt the Collegium campus or during Collegium-sponsored event or program.

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. A Collegium mental health professional, program supervisor/director, building principal, or suicide prevention coordinator 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 reentry and applicable next steps to ensure the student's readiness to return to school. When authorized by the student's parent/guardian, the designated employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.

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

Reporting Procedures

As stated in this policy, Collegium employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention, and response.

When a Collegium employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay and must be shared with the School Counselor and/or Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Information shall be provided by the Suicide Prevention Coordinator, as appropriate, to guidance counselors, mental health professionals, and nurses.

Documentation created during the course of a referral and response process shall be collected by the Suicide Prevention Coordinator and compiled into an internal and confidential report.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Resources

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention current as of the date of the policy adoption are:

1. Pennsylvania Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative - <http://payspi.org/>.
2. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/#>.
3. Crisis Text Line - <http://www.crisistextline.org/> or text 741-741.
4. Pennsylvania Suicide Prevention Resource Center - <http://www.sprc.org/states/Pennsylvania>.
5. Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide - <http://www.sptsusa.org/>.