

STUDENTS

Suicide Prevention

Prince William County Public Schools is committed to an environment in which students are safe and in which responsible and healthy behaviors are encouraged. The purpose of this regulation is to provide guidelines to ensure the delivery of appropriate preventative and intervention services for students who may be at risk for potential suicide. In accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-272.1, the practices are informed by legal requirements and ethical responsibilities. Areas of responsibility include: detection of potentially suicidal students, assessment of the severity level of potentially suicidal students, notification of parents/guardians, working with parents/guardians to secure necessary services, and monitoring and providing ongoing assistance at school.

I. Definition

Suicidal behavior refers to three separate but frequently overlapping conditions that exist on a continuum: suicidal ideation, suicidal-related communications, and suicide attempts. At-risk behaviors include verbal statements, notes, drawings/pictures, electronic messages, and stated plans with the intent of suicide.

II. Prevention Procedures

All licensed school professionals should become familiar with procedures designed to identify and report students at risk of suicide. Training programs accessed through the Office of Student Services include:

- A. All new educators are required to attend a workshop which defines characteristics of a potentially suicidal student and provides the direction to notify appropriate qualified school personnel to conduct an initial risk assessment, and the overall requirement to notify parents/guardians.
- B. Qualified, licensed, school professionals who by training or job-related duties are responsible for assessing imminent risk of danger related to suicidal ideation, communications, or attempts include: school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses. They are required to

attend an annual updated training. Returning employees are required to attend an annual training as well.

- C. Secondary level students receive suicide prevention lessons dealing with the signs of suicide and resource information.

III. Intervention Procedures

A. Duties of Non-Administrative Educational Professional

Any non-administrative educational professional who discovers that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide while in the jurisdiction of the school will:

1. Immediately notify the administrator(s) of the school;
2. Remain with the student until support personnel have arrived, including, but not limited to, qualified school professionals who assess imminent risk;
3. Evacuate any students from the area, if necessary;
4. Attempt to calm the student and engage the student in conversation until help has arrived.

B. Duties of Administrative Educational Professionals

All administrators who are notified that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide imminently while in the jurisdiction of the school will follow procedures in the Prince William County Public Schools "Crisis Management Plan."

- C. Any school professional who immediately discovers that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide outside of the jurisdiction of the school shall:

1. Immediately call 911;
2. Call the parents/guardians, if possible;
3. Remain with the student until help arrives.

IV. Procedures for Conducting a Suicide Risk Assessment

The qualified, licensed, school professional who by training or job related duties, responsible for assessing imminent risk of danger, shall follow the guidelines outlined in the Prince William County Public Schools Suicide Prevention/Intervention Handbook.

Contact the Parent/Guardian

- A. If the qualified school professional determines that the student is at imminent risk of suicide, the parent/guardian should be contacted immediately. Specific directions are located in the Prince William County Public Schools “Suicide Prevention/Intervention Handbook.”
- B. Inform the parent/guardian of the legal requirement for school to call Prince William County Department of Human Services, Child Protective Services (CPS) to report abuse or neglect, if the student is considered to be at imminent risk for attempted suicide and the parent/guardian refuses to provide care necessary for the student’s health.
- C. If the student indicates that parental abuse or neglect is the reason for contemplating suicide, parental contact should not be made. The licensed school professional should ensure that CPS is notified. The child will be kept safe and secure until the CPS worker, or other authorized individual accepts responsibility for the safety of the child.

V. Conferences with Parent/Guardian

- A. In accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-272.1, when a student is at risk for suicide, the parent/guardian must come to school to pick up the student, except as provided in Section IV.B.3. of this regulation.
- B. A follow-up letter will be sent to the parent/guardian to document concerns and recommendations.
- C. Upon return to school there will be a re-entry meeting.

VI. Guidelines Following an Intervention

The re-entry meeting is intended to be a constructive, collaborative effort to ensure the student's smooth transition back to school. Parental involvement is important. The meeting will focus on determining needed interventions to help the student. Participants in the meeting will be the school administrator, teacher, and a licensed school mental health professional. The team may include parents/guardians, teacher, school social worker, school counselor, school psychologist, student, or others deemed appropriate.

The re-entry plan will be documented and monitored by a designated member of the team through the Intervention Process or an Individual Education Plan if the student receives special education services.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for reviewing this regulation in 2017.

Legal Reference:

Virginia Code § 22.1-272.1