

## **Renaissance Arts Academy Suicide Prevention and Postvention**

### **Purpose/Introduction**

The Renaissance Arts Academy Board of Trustees in recognition of the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students, especially those at risk for self-harm\* to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, hereby adopts this policy. This policy corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

### **\* These groups include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- o Youth affected by suicide;
- o Youth with a history of suicide ideation or attempts;
- o Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse disorders;
- o Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth;
- o Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care;
- o Youth who have suffered traumatic experiences;
- o Youth experiencing the effects of chronic discrimination
- o Youth experiencing the effects of chronic poverty/economic insecurity

### **Prevention Education**

Students will receive age appropriate learning experience through integrated health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self or others. Students are taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about the safety or well being of a peer or significant other. Access to information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development are available to all students. Students who are in need of intervention will be referred to the Student Assistance Program (SAP) team for screening and recommendations.

Counseling services are available for all students along with regular parent symposiums around student emotional health and healthy peer and family relationships.

Messaging about suicide prevention will be carefully monitored to focus on the promotion of emotional health and to avoid suicidal ideation. The school will consult with suicide prevention resources including the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and Your Voice Counts.

## **Staff Training and Responsibilities**

All faculty are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All faculty are expected to exercise sound professional judgment, err on the side of caution and demonstrate extreme sensitivity throughout any crisis situation.

All school personnel are trained annually by the school psychologist on the signs of youth depression/suicide. Professional development sessions always include case studies of students who are experiencing emotional struggle and are at risk for developing depression and/or self injury/suicide. Staff are also trained on the core components of suicide prevention annually and at the beginning of their employment.

Any staff member who is originally made aware of any threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm, that is written, drawn, spoken or threatened, will immediately notify the directors. Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. Thus, in cases of life threatening situations a student's confidentiality will be waived. The school's suicide crisis response procedures will be implemented.

## **Response Procedures**

**Suicide Threat Definition** – A suicide threat is a verbal or non-verbal communication that the individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior.

1. The staff member who learns of the threat will locate the individual and arrange for or provide constant adult supervision.
2. The above-mentioned staff member will immediately inform the director/designee.
3. The director/designee will involve student services/counseling staff, school nurse or other trained mental health professional in their absence.
4. The appropriate staff or approved agency provider will determine risk and intervention needed by interviewing the student, and gathering appropriate supportive documentation from advisors or others who witnessed the threat.
5. The director/designee will contact the parent/guardian, apprise them of the situation and make recommendations.
6. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the advisor/designee will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and the actions taken.
7. If the parent refuses to cooperate, and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, an SAP team member will pursue a 302 mental health assessment by calling County Emergency Services at (213) 738-4924, and asking for a delegate. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action. If a 302 mental health assessment is granted, the

- first-hand witness will be the petitioner, with support from the directors.
8. If the county delegate authorizes a 302 mental health assessment, then the county will authorize transportation to the assessment
  9. Involve the SAP team for follow-up and support.

### **Suicidal Act or Attempt on School Grounds or During a School Sponsored Activity**

A suicidal act (also referred to as suicide attempt) – a potentially self- injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill himself or herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

The first staff member on the scene will call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.

1. A staff member will notify the director/designee.
2. Staff members will move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students will not be allowed to observe the scene.
3. Director/designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
4. Director/designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
5. The Director/designee will consult with the Services for Teens At Risk-Center Director/designee in planning actions.
6. The Director/designee will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.
7. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the director/designee will inform their treatment provider/s of what occurred and the actions taken.
8. Director/designee will involve the SAT team for follow-up and support.
9. Director/designee will request written documentation from any treating facilities prior to a student's return to school.
10. Student services staff will promptly follow up with any students or staff who might have witnessed the attempt, and contact their parents/guardians.
11. Student Services staff will provide supportive counseling and document any actions taken.
12. Media representatives will be referred to Directors. School staff will make no statements to the media.

### **Suicide Act or Attempt Not on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity but Reported to a School Employee**

Follow the procedures outlined under Suicide Threat.

### **Suicide of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity**

A suicide – death caused self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Note: The coroner's or medical examiner's office must first confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of death. The school will adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.

When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the director/designee will confer with the SAP and school safety team and promptly implement crisis response procedures. These actions may include the following:

1. The first staff member on the scene will call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow all emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.
2. A staff member will notify the director/designee.
3. Staff members will move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students will not be allowed to observe the scene.
4. Director/designee will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
5. Director/designee will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
6. Director/designee will inform the district and or call for assistance/consultation from the County's on-call crisis response team at 800 854 7771.
7. Director/designee will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.

### **Postvention**

The staff will address the needs of the school community after a suicide incident through several means and will coordinate services for the victim, the victim's family, friends, and the wider school community to minimize wherever possible the negative impact on the school community.

The director or designee will:

1. Immediately notify, regardless of the day or time, the district and any other appropriate agency about the incident.
2. Verify and obtain as much factual information as possible via school

- police, the parent/guardian, or others who may have the facts depending on circumstances.
3. Assemble a response team using school-based and community resources and the school's service providers that are part of the SAP teams to insure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
  4. Not describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents, staff or students unless written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner. Decisions about whether to share the coroner's findings will be made in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Services for Teens At Risk-Center's Postvention Standards Manual.
  5. Promptly collect and safeguard the student's belongings any student work, or photo or staff belongings from his/her desk (in the event of a staff death). Consult with family members and determine a mutually agreeable date and time in private, to return these belongings.
  6. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred using written communication if school has already begun, followed by a staff meeting at the conclusion of the day. If the death occurred in the evening, convene a staff meeting prior to the start of school the next day.
  7. Designate space for all postvention activities.
  8. Once obtained, provide funeral arrangements and related details to students, staff via Main Office and parents via written communication.
  9. Arrange for and refer staff to counselling services for additional support.
  10. Prepare and send a parent information letter home with students in accordance with in the Services for Teens At Risk-Center's Postvention guidance.
  11. Prioritize classrooms and students who will need immediate attention and connect them with the response team or other appropriate resources as determined by student services staff.
  12. Refer media requests to district spokesperson.
  13. Do not disclose any information or details to the media.
  14. Meet with the response team at the end of the day or days during crisis management activities to insure the exchange of important information, as well as to insure communication and further planning of activities.
  15. Check in periodically with the family, staff and students to insure that everyone is supported as much as feasible with the context of the school setting.

### **Actions that will be Avoided**

1. Announcements about incidents over the public address system.
2. Assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss suicide.
3. Canceling school, classes or pre-planned activities unless absolutely necessary.

## **Memorials**

It is recognized that grieving individuals need a variety of opportunities to personally express their emotions and reactions to this type of death. Recommendations and ideas for a memorial should be taken into consideration and discussed with the family and the response team prior to being implemented. Memorials must be carefully and tastefully planned, considering a broad range of responses.