

THE PREUSS SCHOOL UC SAN DIEGO  
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LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0536  
URL: [HTTPS://PREUSS.UCSD.EDU](https://preuss.ucsd.edu)

Dr. Helen V. Griffith  
*Superintendent*

Dr. Matthew Steitz  
*Principal*

**October 1, 2024**

**Policy: Suicide Prevention and Related Mental Health Policy / CR1003 Suicide and Mental Health Policy**

**Purpose of Policy:**

The Board of Directors of The Preuss School UC San Diego recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on scholars and families, the principal or designee shall develop preventative strategies and intervention procedures.

The principal or designee shall involve school health professionals, school counselors, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, scholars, local health agencies, professionals, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the school's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

**Content of CR1003 Suicide and Mental Health Policy:**

**Prevention and Instruction:**

Suicide prevention strategies shall include, but not limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances scholars' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among scholars.

The school's instructional and scholar support program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of scholars 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 severity of the youth suicide problem, the school'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 school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

**Staff Development**

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be designed to help staff identify and find help for scholars at risk of suicide. The training shall be offered under the direction of school staff and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research and identify risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feeling of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors.
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in scholars' mental and emotional health.
3. Research based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health.
4. School and community resources and services for scholars and families in crisis and ways to access them.
5. School procedures for intervening when a scholar attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.

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### **Intervention**

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a scholar's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the principal, another school administrator, psychologist, or school counselor. The principal, another school administrator, psychologist or counselor shall then notify the scholar's parents/guardians as soon as possible, and may refer the scholar to mental health resources in the school or community.

Scholars shall be encouraged through the education program and in school activities to notify a teacher, principal, another school administrator, counselor or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another scholar's suicidal intentions.

The principal or designee shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure scholar safety and appropriate communities in the event that a suicide occurs, or an attempt is made by a member of the scholar student body or staff on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

### **Postvention Plan:**

Postvention refers to proactive services offered to a school, program, or individuals following a traumatic event or death. Suicide postvention usually occurs following the suicide of a scholar or the suicide attempts of scholars. In some cases, postvention occurs after a series of suicides or clusters.

**Designated school-based coordinator** – family support specialist

**Designated media spokesperson** – superintendent and/or UC San Diego communications officer

**School based suicide crisis response team** – family support specialist, guidance counselors, school psychologist, attendance coordinator

In the aftermath of a suicide, the administration and school-based coordinator will immediately implement the postvention plan.

- Allow staff time to obtain accurate information about the death and time to process feelings before they must confront scholars.
- Allow time for classroom information and discussion about the death.
- Gather a list of necessary mental health resources to use as needed and for referral.

### **Teachers and staff will:**

- Get accurate information on the death and provide this to scholars per direction of administration.
- Allow age appropriate discussion or questions.
- Offer alternatives other than suicide for scholars who are hurting.
- Identify scholars who are:
  - Close to the victim
  - Identify with the victim
  - Have high-risk history
  - Seem especially affected by the death

### **Clear messages staff should impart upon scholars include:**

- Expressing grief reactions is important and appropriate.
- Feelings such as guilt, anger, and responsibility are normal.
- There must be no secrets when suicide is a possibility and if any scholar is worried about themselves or anyone else, TELL an adult.

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**Responsibilities of the School Principal or Designee:**

1. Convene the school-based crisis response team.
2. Contact the family of the deceased to express condolences.
3. Inform the school superintendent and administrators of schools where siblings are enrolled.
4. Schedule the time and place for after school debriefing sessions for school personnel to provide for emotional support and to review next steps.
5. Provide information about the death and funeral arrangements to parents of other scholars.
6. Prohibit scholars to leave school premises only with parental permission and documentation.
7. Implement an enhanced system to carefully track scholar attendance.

**Responsibilities of the School Based Suicide Crisis Response Team:**

1. Once activated by the school administrator or designee, the crisis team manages the emotional fallout within the school community to decrease the potential for copycat behavior.
2. Contact law enforcement to verify the facts of the case.
3. Meet with school staff as soon as possible to communicate next steps.
  - a. Mobilize the plan for communicating the news to scholars and parents.
  - b. Prepare school personnel for scholar student body reactions.
  - c. Allow time for staff to ask questions and express feelings.
  - d. Clarify the pre-arranged steps that will be taken to support school personnel, scholars, and parents/guardians (grief counseling, debriefing etc).
  - e. Review process for scholars leaving school grounds and tracking scholar attendance.
  - f. Consider the possibility of copycat behavior and ask staff to identify concerns they may have about individual scholars, and clarify how to monitor at-risk scholars.
  - g. Announce how the school will interact with media representatives. Remind staff not to talk with the media or spread rumors and that all inquiries must be directed to designated media spokesperson.
  - h. Consider the feelings that may be brought on by a death by suicide such as guilt, anger, responsibility, fears for personal safety and wellbeing. Remind staff of available resources for help in dealing with these feelings.
4. Call regional/local mental health agencies, other school counselors, and clergy to arrange for crisis intervention and debriefing assistance if arranged in prior planning.
5. Announce the death to scholars through a prearranged system of advisor/advisee or home room announcements in which all scholars are given the same information at the same time by teachers they know and trust, allowing time for initial reactions and discussion.
6. Notify families as soon as possible, so that they will be prepared and available to provide support to each scholar. Resources and information on youth suicide should be provided at the same time.
7. Relay information about visiting hours and funeral to scholars, faculty, staff, and community members in a sensitive manner. Announce arrangements for support resources at the same time.
8. Mobilize pre-planned strategy to monitor and assist and other scholars who are considered at-risk for suicide.
9. Conduct daily debriefing with faculty and staff during the crisis and postvention periods.
10. Document activities as dictated by school protocols. Each crisis presents an opportunity to improve the process for handling the next crisis, so documentation is important.

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**Revised: Oct. 1, 2024**

**Authorized by:**

**Date:**