



**Responsible Office:** Office of Counseling

**BOARD POLICY 5650**  
**STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION**

**PURPOSE**

The Board of Trustees (Board) recognizes that Washoe County School District (District) employees, and those in the schools in particular, are well-situated to identify the warning signs of suicide in students and make appropriate referrals for help. Any possibility of suicidal ideation or behavior requires vigilant attention from employees, students and their families, and the community. This Board Policy, and any associated documents, shall provide the framework within the District for student suicide prevention.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. "Mental Health" is a state of mental, emotional, and cognitive health that can impact perceptions, choices and actions affecting wellness and functioning. Mental health conditions include depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance use disorders. Mental health can be impacted by the home and social environment, early childhood adversity or trauma, physical health, and genes.
2. "Self-Harm" is a behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. Self-harm behaviors can be either non-suicidal or suicidal. Although non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) lacks suicidal intent, youth who engage in any type of self-harm should receive mental health care. Treatment can improve coping strategies to lower the urge to self-harm and reduce the long-term risk of a future suicide attempt.
3. "Suicidal Behavior" is a suicide attempt, injury to oneself associated with at least some level of intent, developing a plan or strategy for suicide, gathering the means for a suicide plan, or any other overt action or thought indicating intent to end one's life.
4. "Suicidal Ideation" is thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or the intent to end one's life is still considered suicidal ideation and shall be taken seriously.

5. "Suicide" is death caused by 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. Additionally, parent/guardian preference shall be considered in determining how the death is communicated to the larger community.
6. "Suicide Attempt" is a self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to die. A suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. A mixture of ambivalent feelings, such as a wish to die and a desire to live, is a common experience with most suicide attempts. Therefore, ambivalence is not a reliable indicator of the seriousness or level of danger of a suicide attempt or the person's overall risk.
7. "Suicide Contagion" is the process by which suicidal behavior or a suicide completion influences an increase in the suicide risk of others. Identification, modeling, and guilt are each thought to play a role in contagion. Although rare, suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides within a community.
8. "Suicide Postvention" is a crisis intervention strategy designed to assist with the grief process following suicide loss. This strategy, when used appropriately, reduces the risk of suicide contagion, provides the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide death, addresses the social stigma associated with suicide, and disseminates factual information after the death of a member of the school community. Often a community or school's healthy postvention effort can lead to readiness to engage further with suicide prevention efforts and save lives.

## **POLICY**

1. District employees and volunteers shall report comments or knowledge of student expressions of suicidal thoughts to appropriate helping school professional employees such as a school counselor, nurse, administrator, school police officer, or other District mental health professional such as a school psychologist or school social worker immediately and without delay. Employees shall immediately and without delay communicate and collaborate with families related to potential suicide concerns and prevention efforts.
2. District helping school professional employees will inform and provide resources to an adult family member/guardian of the student.
3. In creating this Board Policy, the Board recognizes the risk of suicide or self-harm to all students regardless of age, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion, or disability. Certain students and

groups of students have been deemed to be of particularly high risk of suicide. Those students and student groups include, but are not limited to:

- a. Students impacted by a suicide;
  - b. Students with disabilities, mental illness or substance use disorders;
  - c. Students who reside in settings other than a traditional home, including, but not limited to, children in transition and foster care, justice involved and homelessness;
  - d. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning students;
  - e. Children of veterans or service members; and
  - f. Any other group that scientific research indicates to be at a high risk of suicide e.g., students with an incarcerated caregiver, American Indian/Alaska Native etc.
4. Although the components of crisis management shall be contained within the District's confidential emergency plan, the District's suicide prevention strategies include, but are not limited to:
- a. Prevention education activities in schools and part of health and counseling standards;
  - b. Identification and Intervention procedures;
  - c. Trainings to employees on warning signs and risk/protective factors associated with depression, suicidal behavior, self-injury, and invitations for help;
  - d. Protocols which employees, students, and their families can report concerns to appropriate District employees, law enforcement, or outside resources;
  - e. Protocols and procedures for employee response to a crisis situation where there is a student is in imminent danger to themselves or others or there is serious and foreseeable harm
  - f. Distribution of information to parents/guardians related to community-based mental health resources; and
  - g. Follow-up support for the student and family.
5. District employees who have actual knowledge of suicidal behavior ideation, self-harm, or intent to harm others must take the proper steps to report the information to the building principal or designee who will, in turn, notify the

appropriate school and district officials, contact the student's family, and immediately and without delay provide appropriate resource services. A District letter including resources and information will be given to the family and will include lifesaving numbers.

- a. The District shall implement a suicide intervention process which includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:
  - i. A student is identified as having suicidal ideation or self-harm behaviors or is possibly at risk for suicide;
  - ii. Qualified employees (school counselor, social worker, nurse, or psychologist) shall gather information from the student, other possible stakeholders or witnesses and ensure a chain of supervision; and
  - iii. The parent/guardian shall be notified. Discussion with the parent/guardian may include safety planning such as reducing access to lethal means, or immediate law enforcement and/or medical staff involvement, in addition to resources and connections.
6. While District employees may recognize potentially suicidal youth and may make an initial statement, the District cannot provide in-depth mental health counseling. Designated District employees shall refer students who exhibit suicidal behaviors to an appropriate outside service for further assessment and counseling.
7. District employees shall partner with and provide outreach to persons and organizations in the community that may be able to assist with the prevention of suicide or intervention with a student who is at risk of suicide. This may include, but is not limited to, state and local health organizations, private practitioners, and religious and other nonprofit organizations.
8. The Board hereby directs the Superintendent to adopt an Administrative Regulation to implement and maintain the purpose of this Board Policy. The Superintendent shall include in the Administrative Regulation the following provisions:
  - a. Providing information and training to employees and students concerning the prevention of suicide. This may include, but is not limited to, instruction concerning the identification of:
    - i. Appropriate crisis intervention and mental health services at the school and in the community, including when and how to refer students and their families for such services; and

- ii. Other persons and organizations in the community including, but not limited to, religious and other nonprofit organizations, that may be able to assist with the response to a suicide.
  - b. Review of appropriate materials concerning the prevention of suicide associated with bullying and cyber-bullying and appropriate methods to respond to such incidents;
  - c. Methods for recognizing, screening, referring, and responding to students in emotional or behavioral distress, including those who exhibit indicators of substance abuse, violence, or suicide;
  - d. Protocols and methods of providing follow-up support for impacted students (postvention); and
  - e. Training of school police/resource officers in the prevention of suicide.
9. District procedures regarding confidentiality shall be observed throughout any intervention.

#### **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

1. This Board Policy reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
  - a. Board Policy 5100, Student Behavior;
  - b. Board Policy 5200, Family Engagement; and
  - c. Board Policy 5700, Safe and Respectful Learning Environment.
2. This Board Policy complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), to include:
  - a. Chapter 388, System of Public Instruction.

#### **REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Revision	Modification
10/15/2019	1.0	Adopted in compliance with Senate Bill 204 (2019) and NRS 388.256
12/14/2021	2.0	Revised: clarify language, add definitions, align formatting pursuant to BP 9070.