
COMPREHENSIVE SELF-HARM/SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

Pathways Academy Adult Education (“PAAE” or the “Charter School”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In an effort to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Charter School has developed the following procedures.

In compliance with Education Code section 215, this policy has been developed in consultation with the Charter School and community stakeholders, school employed mental health professionals, administrators, other school staff members, suicide prevention experts, and the county mental health plan in planning, implementing, and evaluating the Charter School’s strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. The Charter School may work in conjunction with other community supports to identify additional resources.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all of our students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to youth suicidal behavior. Protecting the health and well-being of all students is of utmost importance to our school and is in line with school mandates for all professionals and individuals working with youth. Because it is impossible to predict when a crisis will occur, preparedness is necessary for every school. Youth suicide is preventable, and parents, educators and schools are key to prevention. Preventing suicide depends not only on suicide prevention policies, but also on a holistic approach that promotes healthy lifestyles, families, and communities. Thus, this policy is intended to be paired with other policies and efforts that support the emotional and behavioral well-being of youth.

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, the Charter School has appointed the suicide prevention liaison, as discussed below, to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for the Charter School. This policy shall be reviewed and revised at least every five years in conjunction with the previously mentioned community stakeholders.

Staff Development

The Charter School along with its partners has carefully reviewed available staff training to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention. Training shall be provided for all school staff members and shall include the following:

1. All suicide prevention trainings shall be offered under the direction of mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, other public entity professionals, such as psychologists or social workers) who have received advanced

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training specific to suicide. Staff training may be adjusted year-to-year based on previous professional development activities and emerging best practices.

2. At a minimum, all staff shall participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention) at the beginning of their employment or annually. Core components of the general suicide prevention training shall include:
 - a. Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors;
 - b. How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide;
 - c. How to respond appropriately to the youth who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and an immediate referral for a suicide risk assessment;
 - d. Emphasis on immediately referring (same day) any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide for assessment while staying under constant monitoring by staff member;
 - e. Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide;
 - f. Reviewing the data annually to look for any patterns or trends of the prevalence or occurrence of suicide ideation, attempts, or death. Data from the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (Cal-SCHLS) should also be analyzed to identify school climate deficits and drive program development. See the Cal-SCHLS Web site at <http://cal-schls.wested.org/>.
 - g. Information regarding groups of students judged by the school, and available research, to be at elevated risk for suicide. These groups include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Youth affected by suicide;
 - ii. Youth with a history of suicide ideation or attempts;
 - iii. Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse disorders;
 - iv. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth;
 - v. Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care;
 - vi. Youth who have suffered traumatic experiences.
3. In addition to the above orientations to the core components of suicide prevention, ongoing staff professional development for all staff may include the following components:
 - a. The impact of traumatic stress on emotional and mental health;
 - b. Common misconceptions about suicide;
 - c. Charter School and community suicide prevention resources;
 - d. Appropriate messaging about suicide (correct terminology, safe messaging guidelines);

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- e. The factors associated with suicide (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors);
- f. How to identify youth who may be at risk of suicide;
- g. Charter School approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including multi-tiered systems of support and referrals). Such procedures should emphasize that the suicidal student should be constantly supervised until a suicide risk assessment is completed;
- h. Charter School approved procedures for responding to the aftermath of suicidal behavior (suicidal behavior postvention);
- i. Responding after a suicide occurs (suicide postvention);
- j. Resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

4. Training materials approved by the Charter School shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the school site and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Employees of the Charter School must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. The Charter School does not authorize or encourage a school employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so, in accordance with applicable law.

Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers of Minor Students Participation and Education

1. Parents/guardians/caregivers may be included in suicide prevention efforts.
2. This Suicide Prevention Policy shall be easily accessible and prominently displayed on the Charter School's Web page and included in the parent/guardian and student handbook.
3. Parents/guardians/caregivers may provide input on the development and implementation of this policy.

Student Participation and Education

The Charter School shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience.

The Charter School's instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed. If suicide prevention is included in the Charter School's instructional

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curriculum, it shall consider the grade level and age of the students and be delivered and discussed in an appropriate manner. Under the supervision of an appropriately trained individual acting within the scope of the individual's credential or license, students may:

1. Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress which may include:
 - a. Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma;
 - b. How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others;
 - c. Help-seeking strategies for oneself and others, including how to engage school-based and community resources and refer peers for help;
 - d. Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
2. Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding the Charter School's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

Student-focused suicide prevention education may be incorporated into curricula (e.g., science classes, physical education).

The Charter School will support the creation and implementation of programs that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention, as appropriate (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Week).

Intervention and Emergency Procedures

The Charter School designates the following administrators to act as the primary and secondary suicide prevention liaisons:

1. School Counselor
2. School Psychologist

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they shall promptly notify the primary designated suicide prevention liaison. If this primary suicide prevention liaison is unavailable, the staff shall promptly notify the secondary suicide prevention liaison.

The suicide prevention liaison(s) shall immediately notify the Executive Director or designee, who shall then notify the parent/guardian of minor students as soon as possible if appropriate and in the best interest of the student. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers of a minor student should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.

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The suicide prevention liaison(s) shall also refer the student to mental health resources in the community as appropriate.

When a student is in imminent danger (e.g., has access to a gun, is on a rooftop, or in other unsafe conditions), a call shall be made to 911.

In the event a suicide attempt by a student is reported at a school sponsored activity, the suicide prevention liaison(s) shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one or more of the following, as appropriate:
 - a. Ensuring immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
 - b. Calling law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
 - c. Ensuring that a minor student is under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene;
 - d. Remaining calm, keeping in mind the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed;
 - e. Moving all other students out of the immediate area if applicable;
 - f. Providing comfort to the student, listening and allowing the student to talk and being comfortable with moments of silence;
 - g. Promising privacy and help, but not promising confidentiality.
2. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.
3. Follow up with the adult student, or parent/guardian of a minor student and the minor student, in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed and coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary.
4. After a referral is made, the Charter School shall verify with the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student that the follow-up treatment has been accessed. Parents/guardians of minor students will be required to provide documentation of care for the student. If parents/guardians of minor students refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the suicide prevention liaison(s) shall meet with the parent of a minor student to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues) and work to rectify the situation and build an understanding of care. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Charter School may contact Child Protective Services.

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5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at the Charter School.
6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

In the event a suicide attempt by a student is reported and unrelated to school activities, the Executive Director, the suicide prevention liaison(s), and/or their designee(s) shall take the following steps to support the student:

1. Contact the adult student or parent/guardian of the minor student and offer support to the family.
2. Discuss with the family how they would like the Charter School to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students.
3. Obtain permission from the adult student or parent/guardian of the minor student to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis are correct.
4. The suicide prevention liaisons shall handle any media requests.
5. Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students.

Supporting Students during or after a Mental Health Crisis

Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, the Executive Director, another school administrator, psychologist, counselor, suicide prevention liaisons, or other adults when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions. Staff should treat each report seriously, calmly, and with active listening and support. Staff should be non-judgmental to students and discuss with the student, and parent/guardian of a minor student, about additional resources to support the student.

Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt

A student who has verbalized ideation or attempted suicide is at a higher risk for suicide in the months following the crisis. Having a streamlined and well-planned re-entry process ensures the safety and wellbeing of students who have previously attempted suicide and reduces the risk of another attempt. An appropriate re-entry process is an important component of suicide prevention. Involving students in planning for their return to school provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. PAAE has determined that the following steps be implemented upon the student's re-entry: obtaining a written release from the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student to speak with any health care providers; conferring with the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student about any specific requests on how

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to handle the situation; informing the student's teachers about possible days of absences; allowing accommodations for makeup work (being understanding that missed assignments may add stress to the student); appropriate staff maintaining ongoing contact with the student to monitor the student's actions and mood; and working with the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on the school community, including students and staff. The Charter School shall follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide death, which incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

The suicide prevention liaison(s) shall:

1. Coordinate with the Executive Director to:
 - a. Confirm death and cause;
 - b. Identify a staff member to contact the deceased's family (within 24 hours);
 - c. Notify all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).
2. Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:
 - a. Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death;
 - b. Emotional support and resources available to staff;
 - c. Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services (if this is the protocol that is decided by administration);
 - d. Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.
3. Prepare staff to respond to the needs of students regarding the following:
 - a. Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment;
 - b. Talking points for staff to notify students;
 - c. Resources available to students.
4. Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior;
5. Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior;
6. Communicate with the larger school community about suicide death;
7. Consider funeral arrangements for family and school community;
8. Respond to memorial requests in a respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered;
9. Identify a media spokesperson if needed.
10. Include long-term suicide postvention responses:
 - a. Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant events) and how these will be addressed

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- b. Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased
- c. Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide

Student Identification Cards

Charter School will include the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) on all student identification cards, to the extent these are issued. The Charter School may also include the number for the Crisis Text Line, which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741 and a local suicide prevention hotline on all student identification cards.