

**MEMORANDUM**

Aug 24, 2009  
MT 025.09  
MT.305 636-6147

**TO:** All Teachers and Staff  
Educational Alternative Outreach Program

**FROM:** Miguel Torres, Principal   
Educational Alternative Outreach Program

**SUBJECT: MANDATORY REPORTING OF STUDENT'S SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR**

Please review the attached information related to suicidal behavior displayed by students.

Please share this information with all staff members. Your assistance in adhering to these procedures is appreciated.

MT/mg

Attachment

## **GUIDELINE #34: SUICIDE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**

### **CURRENT LAW AND/OR PRACTICE**

Section 229.591(3)(e), F.S., states that "Communities and schools provide an environment that is drug-free and protects students' health, safety, and civil rights." The M-DCPS Comprehensive Student Services Program suggests that as part of its responsive services, counseling and support be provided to students and/or families facing crisis situations.

For your information and guidance, the following guidelines have been established by the Division of Student Services, Department of Crisis Management, in regard to the prevention of and response to potential suicides in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **1. Notify Parents/guardians Regarding Suicide Prevention and Intervention Program**

Parents/guardians should be informed that Miami-Dade County Public Schools has established suicide prevention and intervention guidelines and that there are trained school-based Critical Incident Response Teams, and counseling professionals who can assist their child in times of crisis. Additionally, parents/guardians should be made aware of the warning signs of suicide and of the need to notify the child's counselor if their child becomes depressed or suicidal at home. Reasonable effort should be made to communicate with parents in their primary language or in the language in which they feel comfortable. The mode of transmission should also be adjusted, where necessary, to promote comprehension, acceptance, and trust. (School Board Rule 6Gx13- 1B-1.011)

#### **2. Review Student Intervention Profile**

The Student Intervention Profile is a computer-generated report which is distributed to schools every nine weeks, by the Office of Information Technology. This profile is an indicator of a sudden or dramatic change in a student's performance, attendance, or behavior. Counselors should review the Student Intervention Profiles every nine weeks. The students should be counseled regarding a change in three or more of the elements monitored. Parents/guardians should also be notified of the change in their child's performance, attendance, and/or behavior.

## **Guideline #34: Suicide Prevention and Intervention (continued)**

### **3. Promote Awareness of the Warning Signs Associated with Suicidal Behavior**

Student services counseling professionals should review with the administration, faculty, and staff the following and other warning signs for a potential suicide:

- a. changes in eating or sleeping habits
- b. increasing isolation from friends and family
- c. tendency to become more active and aggressive than usual
- d. lower academic achievement
- e. giving away a valued possession or increased interest in getting his/her "life in order"
- f. talking about or threatening suicide
- g. sudden and intense interest in religious beliefs and the afterlife
- h. recent loss, such as a divorce or death in the family, death of a role model or idol, a close friend dying or moving away, or a breakup of a romantic relationship
- i. abusing drugs or alcohol

### **4. Refer Students Experiencing Emotional Stress**

Any person, including, but not limited to, an administrator, a teacher, or any other staff member, who has reason to believe that a student is experiencing emotional stress should refer the student to his/her counselor. The counselor shall implement the procedures listed below:

- a. counsel with the student to identify the problem and, if possible, resolve the problem or reduce the level of stress experienced
- b. notify the parents, if the student is experiencing significant stress
- c. consult with additional student services professionals, when deemed appropriate
- d. meet with the counselee on a regularly scheduled basis to provide active support through follow-up counseling

## **Guideline #34: Suicide Prevention and Intervention (continued)**

- e. provide group counseling to small groups of students who are experiencing stress
- f. provide the family with a selection of community agencies/providers if mental health services are needed

### **5. Respond to Student's Suicidal Threat**

When a student threatens to harm himself/herself, e.g., a suicide gesture, a suicide threat, or suicidal ideation, the following actions should be taken:

- a. inform the appropriate administrator and a student services counseling professional of the threat
- b. call 911 and the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department:305-757-2677 in a life-threatening emergency
- c. provide and maintain constant professional supervision of the student until supervision is assumed by the police/fire department, the parents/guardians, or the emergency contact person
- d. notify the parents/guardians immediately unless there is suspected or confirmed child abuse. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be contacted, appropriate authorities e.g., police, Florida Department of Children and Families, must be contacted
- e. provide the student and his/her parent(s)/guardians with a list of community mental health agencies/providers, such as:
  - (1) Crisis Center
  - (2) Mental Health Clinic
  - (3) Hospital
  - (4) Family Physician
- f. request that the parents/guardians sign a release-of-information form with the community agency or private therapist so that the school and the provider can work together to assist the student
- g. notify the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Department of Crisis Management: 305-995-2273, of **all** suicidal behavior

## **Guideline #34: Suicide Prevention and Intervention (continued)**

- h. send the Suicide Prevention Sample Letter to Parents, if appropriate, as a follow-up to a conference with the parents (See Appendix, pages A-49 - A-51.)
- i. input the appropriate student services codes into ISIS (i.e., RS, RI, RP)

### **6. Respond to Student Suicide Attempt**

When a student has made an attempt to take his/her life on campus the following action should be taken:

- a. assess injury or condition
- b. apply emergency first aid/CPR, if appropriate
- c. call 911 and the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department: 305-757-2677, if emergency medical services are required
- d. secure and stabilize the site of the event
- e. isolate victim from others
- f. do not tamper with any evidence, or clean area, until police have completed their investigation
- g. if weapon must be carried or relocated, wrap in heavy cloth and point down at all times
- h. school counseling professional and/or other appropriate staff members should remain with the student until parent(s)/guardian(s) arrives at school or hospital
- i. notify School Operations: 305-995-2913
- j. notify the Region Office
- k. notify Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Department of Crisis Management: 305-995-2273
- l. locate any witnesses who may have information about the event
- m. provide necessary information and cooperation to investigating authorities
- n. provide counseling services for witnesses and other students/staff impacted by the event
- o. conduct staff meeting to discuss event, if appropriate
- p. provide recommendations to parent(s)/guardian(s) for future care of student
- q. input the appropriate student services codes into ISIS (i.e., RS, RI, RP)

### **7. Return of Student to School Following Suicide Attempt**

When the student returns to school following a suicide attempt, assign a counselor or other appropriate student services professional to take the following actions:

- a. meet with the student prior to his or her return to school and offer support

### **Guideline #34: Suicide Prevention and Intervention (continued)**

- b. provide the student with direct access to an appropriate staff member; the most likely person is the counselor, but if the student indicates a preference for a different staff member, this request should be considered
  - c. confer with only the staff members who will be responsible for the student during the school day to sensitize them to the student's need for support, and to familiarize them with appropriate ways to provide that support
  - d. ascertain if the student has received counseling services through a community agency or clinic
  - e. consult with the student's current therapist for guidance, if written parental permission has been obtained to do so to ensure the student's readjustment to the school environment
  - f. ensure that counseling services are available to the returning student
  - g. consult with other student services professionals to determine if additional psychological services should be provided
- 8. Implement suicide completion response procedures following the suicide of a student or staff member. Refer to the M-DCPS Critical Incident Response Plan and the Crisis Management Resource Manual for further information on this topic.**

In the event that the suicide occurred on campus, the response procedures are as follows:

- a. call 911 and the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department: 305-757-2677
- b. maintain and model a sense of calm and control
- c. assess situation
- d. \*mobilize school/work site Critical Incident Response Team
- e. \*notify School Operations: 305-995-2913
- f. \*notify Region Office
- g. \*notify the Public Information Officer: 305-995-1126

### **Guideline #34: Suicide Prevention and Intervention (continued)**

- h. \*contact the Department of Crisis Management: 305-995-2273
- i. secure/contain incident site and affected area, and/or commence building/campus evacuation procedure
- j. do not tamper with any evidence, or clean area, until police have completed their investigation
- k. prioritize student and staff safety
- l. assign campus security liaison to meet and direct emergency personnel to incident site
- m. obtain all relevant information regarding the incident, including those involved
- n. accompany police officer to personally inform parent/guardian/spouse of the deceased student/staff member
- o. \*provide an opportunity for students and staff to process their reactions regarding the suicide. Students who are impacted by this incident should be given the opportunity to see a school counseling professional
- p. \*discourage any “glorification” of a suicide; suicide death should not be announced over the public address system nor are school-sponsored memorial activities recommended
- q. \*convene faculty and staff at the end of the day to review the day’s events and make additional plans
- r. \*maintain ongoing contact with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and staff, as necessary

For a suicide occurring off campus, the response procedures are as follows:

- a. confirm that the incident has occurred
- b. designate staff to respond to incident site and/or hospital, if deemed appropriate
- c. make a home visit to offer condolences
- d. follow indicated procedures (\*) for suicide occurring on campus

