[Insert District Name Here] **School Suicide Prevention Policy**

[Insert County] County [Insert District Name Here] Public Schools is committed to an environment in which students are safe and in which responsible and healthy behaviors are encouraged. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to ensure the delivery of appropriate preventative and intervention services for students who may be at risk for potential suicide. Areas of responsibility include: detection of potentially suicidal students, assessment of the severity level of potentially suicidal students, notification of parents/guardians, working with parents/guardians to secure necessary services, and monitoring and providing ongoing assistance at school.

I. Definition

Suicidal behavior refers to three separate but frequently overlapping conditions that exist on a continuum: suicidal ideation, suicidal-related communications, and suicide attempts. At-risk behaviors include verbal statements, notes, drawings/pictures, electronic messages, physically harmful behaviors, and stated plans with the intent of suicide.

II. Prevention Procedures

All licensed school professionals should become familiar with procedures designed to identify and report students at risk of suicide. Training programs include:

A. All new educators are required to attend a workshop which defines characteristics of a potentially suicidal student and provides the direction to notify appropriate qualified school personnel to conduct an initial risk assessment, and the overall requirement to notify parents/guardians.

B. Qualified, licensed, school professionals who by training or job-related duties are responsible for assessing imminent risk of danger related to suicidal ideation, communications, or attempts include: school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses. They are required to attend regular updated training. Returning employees are required to attend an annual training as well.

C. Secondary level students will receive age appropriate suicide prevention lessons dealing with the warning signs of suicide and resource information. Students are taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. Lessons are taught by (health and physical education teachers, community service providers, and other suicide prevention personnel.)

III. Intervention Procedures

All staff are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All staff are expected to exercise sound professional judgment, and demonstrate extreme sensitivity throughout any crisis situation. All School personnel should be informed of the signs of youth depression/suicide. In cases of life threatening situations a student’s confidentiality will be waived.

A. Duties of Non-Administrative Educational Professional

Any non-administrative educational professional who discovers that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide while in the jurisdiction of the school will:

1. Immediately notify the administrator(s) of the school;

2. Remain with the student until support personnel have arrived, including, but not limited to, qualified school professionals who assess imminent risk;

3. Evacuate any students from the area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.

4. Attempt to calm the student and engage the student in conversation until help has arrived.

B. Duties of Administrative Educational Professionals

1. All administrators who are notified that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide imminently while in the jurisdiction of the school will contact the parent/guardian, apprise them of the situation and make recommendations.

2. The administrators will involve student services/counseling staff, school nurse practitioner or other trained mental health professional in their absence. [Insert appropriate numbers for school and non-school hours.]

3. Put all recommendations in writing and send to the parent/guardian within 1 day of an attempt and 3 days of a suicide threat. [Depending on district policy this may be through certified mail, email delivery confirmation, a parent/guardian signature or other approved communication procedures.]

4. Maintain a file copy of the letter in a secure and appropriate location.

5. If the student is known to be in counseling the Administrator will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred and any actions taken.

6. If the parent refuses to cooperate, and there is any doubt regarding the student’s safety, the school employee who directly witnessed the threat will pursue an involuntary mental health assessment. [Mental health organization who can oversee assessment.]

C. Any school professional who immediately discovers that a student has attempted suicide or may attempt suicide outside of the jurisdiction of the school shall:

1. Immediately call 911

2. Call the parents/guardians, if possible

3. Remain with the student until help arrives.

D. After School Hours

If a threat is made during an after-school program, and no school or district personnel are available, call [Crisis Emergency Service or 1-800-273-TALK] for help. Inform the principal of the incident and actions taken.

IV. Procedures for Conducting a Suicide Risk Assessment

The qualified, licensed, school professional who by training or job related duties, responsible for assessing imminent risk of danger, shall follow the standard risk assessment guidelines.

A. If the qualified school professional determines that the student is at imminent risk of suicide, the parent/guardian should be contacted immediately.

B. Inform the parent/guardian of the legal requirement for school to call Department of Human Services, Child Protective Services (CPS) to report abuse or neglect, if the student is considered to be at imminent risk for attempted suicide and the parent/guardian refuses to provide care necessary for the student’s health.

C. If the student indicates that parental abuse or neglect is the reason for contemplating suicide, parental contact should not be made. The licensed school professional should ensure that CPS is notified. The child will be kept safe and secure until the CPS worker, or other authorized individual accepts responsibility for the safety of the child.

V. Conferences with Parent/Guardian

A. When a student is at risk for suicide, the parent/guardian must come to school to pick up the student. If an attempt has been made the parent will be directed to either the school or the attending hospital.

B. A follow-up letter will be sent to the parent/guardian to document concerns and recommendations.

C. Upon return to school there will be a re-entry meeting.

VI. Guidelines Following an Intervention

The re-entry meeting is intended to be a constructive, collaborative effort to ensure the student’s smooth transition back to school. Parental involvement is important. The meeting will focus on determining needed interventions to help the student. Participants in the meeting will be the school administrator, teacher, and a licensed school mental health professional. The team may include parents/guardians, teacher, school social worker, school counselor, school psychologist, student, or others deemed appropriate.

The re-entry plan will be documented and monitored by a designated member of the team through the Intervention Process or an Individual Education Plan if the student receives special education services.

VII. Suicide of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity

1. 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. Schools must adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.
2. When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the prinicipal/designee will promptly implement crisis response procedures.

VIII. Guidelines for Postvention

The principal or his/her designee will:

1. Immediately notify, regardless of the day or time, the central office at [ Insert number here.]
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 the circumstances.
3. Assemble response team using school-based and community resources and the school’s service providers. Ensure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
4. Do NOT describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents, staff or students unless you have written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner.
5. Promptly collect and safeguard the student’s belongings from desk or locker, 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 the next school day.
7. Designate a 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. Prioritize classrooms and students who will need immediate attention and connect them with the response team or other appropriate resources as determined by staff.
10. Refer media requests to district or County spokesperson.
11. Do NOT disclose any information or details to the media.
12. Check in periodically with the family, staff and students to ensure that everyone is supported as much as feasible within the context of the school setting.
13. Follow Safe Memorialization Guidelines.
14. Thank those who assisted in the Postvention. Don’t forget to include the faculty, ancillary staff, crisis team, and any outside agency or community members.

IX. Actions to Avoid

1. Do not announce the death of anyone over the public address system.
2. Do not hold an assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss the suicide or attempt.
3. Avoid cancelling school, classes or pre-planned activities unless absolutely necessary; students find comfort in following their normal routine when they are under stress, within reason. Discuss with superintendent prior to proceeding with any cancellations.

X. 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 prior to considering any type of action.