

## **Suicide Prevention Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

Genesis Innovation Academy, in recognition of the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students, to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, hereby adopts this policy. This policy corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

### **2. Prevention Education**

Students will receive age appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self or others. Students are taught not to make promises of confidence when they are concerned about a peer or significant other. Lessons will contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development. Lessons are taught by the health and physical education teachers. Students who need intervention will be referred to administration for further screening and recommendations.

### **3. Staff Training and Responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of students. All staff are expected to exercise sound professional judgment, err on the side of caution and demonstrate extreme sensitivity throughout any crisis. All school personnel should be informed of the signs of youth depression/suicide.

Any staff member who is originally made aware of any threat, or witnesses any attempt, towards self-harm, that is written, drawn, spoken or threatened, will:

1. Immediately contact the Clinic Manager for further evaluation (or contact the Dean of Students if the Clinic Manager is unavailable).
2. Document the occurrence in the student information system

The Clinic Manager will immediately notify the Academy Director (or Head of School if Academy Director is unavailable).

Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. Thus, in cases of life-threatening situations, a student's confidentiality will be waived. The district's suicide crisis intervention procedures will be implemented.

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**4. Suicide Crisis Intervention Procedures Suicide Threat**

**Definition** – A suicide threat is a verbal or non-verbal communication that the individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior.

- a. The staff member who learns of the threat will locate the individual and arrange for, or provide, constant adult supervision.
- b. The above-mentioned staff member will immediately inform the Academy Director and/or Head of School.
- c. The Academy Director and or/Head of School will involve student services/counseling staff and the Clinic Manager, or other trained mental health professional in their absence.
- d. The appropriate staff or approved agency provider will determine risk and intervention needed by interviewing the student and gathering appropriate supportive documentation from teachers or others who witnessed the threat.
- e. The administrator will:
  - Contact the parent/guardian, apprise them of the situation and make recommendations. Most often it is the person conducting the interview who contacts the parent/guardian.
  - Put all recommendations in writing to the parent/guardian.
  - Mail the recommendation through certified mail if there is any question or doubt of the parent/guardian receiving the recommendations.
  - Maintain a file copy of the letter in a secure and appropriate location.
- f. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the administrator will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred, and the actions taken.
- g. If the parent refuses to cooperate, and there is any doubt regarding the child's safety, the school employee who directly witnessed the threat will call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 and ask for a delegate. The delegate will listen to concerns and advise on the course of action.
- h. If further treatment is needed, the school will attempt to receive parent authorization to transport the scholar to a facility. If parent is not reachable or if parent refuses and there is doubt about the child's safety, the Head of School (or designee) will authorize transport to a facility. Staff should not leave the student alone at any time.

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**Note:** If a threat is made during an after-school program, and no school/district Crisis Team personnel are available, call Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 for help. Inform the Academy Director and/or Head of School of the incident and actions taken as soon as possible.

### **Suicidal Act or Attempt on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity**

**Definition<sup>1</sup>** - Suicidal act (also referred to as suicide attempt) – a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person probably intended to kill himself or herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

- a. The first employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.
- b. A staff member must notify the Academy Director and/or Head of School.
- c. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
- d. The administrator will involve student services personnel to assist as needed.
- e. The administrator will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
- f. The administrator will call the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225.
- g. The administrator will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.
- h. If the student is known to be currently in counseling, the administrator will attempt to inform their treatment provider of what occurred, and the actions taken.
- i. The administrator will involve the leadership team for follow-up and support.
- j. The administrator will request written documentation from any treating facilities prior to a student's return to school.

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<sup>1</sup> Crosby A., Ortega L., & Melanson C. Self-directed violence surveillance: Uniform definitions and recommended data elements. Version 1.0. Atlanta GA: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; 2011. Available at [www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/selfdirected\\_violence.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/selfdirected_violence.html)

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- k. Student services staff will promptly follow up with any students or staff who might have witnessed the attempt and contact their parents/guardians.
- l. Student Services staff will provide supportive counseling and document all actions taken.
- m. Media representatives should be referred to the Head of School. School staff should make no statements to the media.

### **Suicide Act or Attempt Not on School Grounds or During a School-Sponsored Activity but Reported to a School Employee**

Follow the procedures outlined under Suicide Threat.

### **Suicide of a Student or Employee on School Grounds or During a School Sponsored Activity**

**Definition** - Suicide – death caused 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. Genesis Administration and the Board of Directors must adhere to the wishes of the family in this regard and respect their right to privacy and confidentiality.

When a sudden unexplained death of a student or staff member occurs, the Head of School will confer with the Board and promptly implement crisis intervention procedures as outlined in the School's Safety Plan. These actions may include the following:

- a. The first employee on the scene must call for help from another staff member, locate the individual and follow district emergency medical procedures, such as calling 911.
- b. A staff member must notify the Head of School/Academy Director.

- c. Staff members should move all other students out of the immediate area and arrange appropriate supervision. Students should not be allowed to observe the scene.
- d. The Head of School/Academy Director will involve the leadership team to assist as needed.
- e. The Head of School/Academy Director will contact parent/guardian and ask them to come to the school or hospital.
- f. The Head of School/Academy Director will inform the Board and call for assistance from the Crisis Intervention team.
- g. The Head of School/Academy Director will document in writing all actions taken and recommendations.

The Head of School will:

- a. Immediately notify, regardless of the day or time, the Board.
- b. Verify and obtain as much factual information as possible via school employees, the parent/guardian, or others who may have the facts depending on circumstances.
- c. Assemble the response team using school-based and community resources; use the procedures to ensure that everyone is informed of what occurred in a timely manner.
- d. Not describe the death as a suicide with the general public, parents, staff or students unless there is written confirmation from the coroner or medical examiner. Decisions about whether to share the coroner's findings will be made in accordance with legal counsel and parent/guardian expectations.
- e. Genesis staff will 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). Genesis staff will consult with family members and determine a mutually agreeable date and time in private, to return these belongings.
- f. Genesis Administration will 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, Administration will convene a staff meeting prior

to the start of school the next day. At the meeting Administration will outline procedures that will be followed per the School Safety Plan.

- g. Administration will designate space for all postvention activities.
- h. Once obtained, Administration will provide funeral arrangements and related details to students, staff via Main Office and parents via written communication.
- i. Administration will prepare and send a parent information letter / communication home following the school's protocol and guidelines.
- j. Administration will prioritize classrooms and students who will need immediate attention and connect them with the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) or other appropriate resources as determined by student services staff.
- k. All staff should refer media requests to Head of Schools (or designated spokesperson).
- l. Staff should not disclose any information or details to the media.
- m. Staff may be asked to meet with the CIT at the end of the day or days during crisis management activities to ensure the exchange of important information, as well as to insure communication and further planning of activities.
- n. Designated staff members will check in periodically with the family, staff and students to ensure that everyone is supported as much as feasible with the context of the school setting.
- o. Administration should thank those who assisted in the postvention. Don't forget to include the faculty, ancillary staff, CIT and any outside agency or community folks.

## **5. Actions to Avoid**

- a. Staff should not announce the death of anyone over the public address system.
- b. Staff should not hold an assembly program or bring large groups of students together in one place to discuss suicide.
- c. Administration should avoid canceling school, classes or pre-planned activities unless absolutely necessary; it is likely that students will find comfort in following their normal routine when they are under stress, within reason. The Head of School will make the final determination on school cancellations in consultation with the Board.

## **6. 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 and discussed with the Head of School and the CIT, as well as the family, prior to being implemented. Memorials must be carefully and tastefully planned, considering a broad range of responses. A variety of activities may in fact occur to celebrate positive remembrances, and these expressions often vary.