

BP 5141.52 SUICIDE PREVENTION

~~**Note:** This optional policy may be revised or deleted as desired and should not be adopted unless the district fully implements it as adopted. In 1985, the Federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (Kelson vs. The City of Springfield, Oregon 767 F. 2d 651) ruled that the parents/guardians of a youth who committed suicide may sue a school because the death allegedly resulted from inadequate training under a district's suicide prevention policy. In 2012, the Alaska Legislature passed the Jason Flatt Act requiring suicide awareness and prevention training for specific school personnel. The Act, which is uncodified and is found at Enrolled SB 137 (2012), also provides civil immunity for districts and employees from a death or personal injury that results from an act or omission in providing or obtaining that training.~~

Note: Effective July 1, 2016, AS 14.30.362 requires suicide awareness and prevention training for specific school personnel. AS 14.30.362 also provides civil immunity for districts and employees from a death or personal injury that results from an act or omission in providing or obtaining that training. The training provided or failure to provide training cannot be construed to impose a specific duty of care on any person.

The School Board finds it important that the tragic situation of adolescent suicide be openly addressed and that staff, students and parents/guardians be made aware of warning signs and procedures by which they may help suicidal students at this especially vulnerable age.

The Board recognizes that all suicide threats must be taken seriously. The Superintendent or designee shall provide appropriate staff members with procedures for intervening in low-risk and in high-risk crisis situations. These procedures shall include guidelines by which staff members may assess the seriousness of a student's risk for suicide.

The Board believes that school staff, students and parents/guardians all can contribute significantly towards the prevention of adolescent suicide. The district shall make available suicide prevention training for each of these segments of the school community.

Parent/Guardian Awareness

Note: The following parent/guardian involvement paragraph will affect school principals' responsibilities.

The Board believes all parents/guardians should be aware of the severity of the youth suicide problem. Before suicide prevention is taught in classrooms, parents/guardians shall be advised and invited to review the curriculum goals and the district suicide prevention policy. Parent/guardian information may be provided, and meetings may be held, to help parents/guardians recognize warning signs of suicide, learn basic steps for

helping suicidal youths, and identify community resources that can help teenagers in crisis.

Staff Awareness & Training

~~**Note:** The Jason Flatt Act requires districts to provide annual training on youth suicide awareness and prevention to the following staff: each teacher, administrator, counselor, and specialist who is employed by the district to provide services to students in grades 7-12. The training must be approved by the Commissioner of Education and provided to teachers at no cost. Training must be not less than two hours in length and may be offered through videoconferencing or an individual program of study.~~

Note: Effective July 1, 2016, AS 14.30.362 requires districts to provide training on a schedule adopted by the Board on youth suicide awareness and prevention to the following staff: each teacher, administrator, counselor, and specialist who is employed by the district to provide services to students.. The training must be approved by the Commissioner of Education and provided to teachers at no cost. Training may be offered through videoconferencing or an individual program of study.

(cf. 4131- Staff Development)

The Board strongly encourages teachers to help students of all ages develop both a positive self-image and a realistic attitude towards potential accomplishments.

In order that district staff may learn suicide prevention strategies, to recognize the warning signs of suicidal crisis, to understand how to help suicidal youths, and to identify helpful community resources, the Superintendent or designee shall arrange annual suicide awareness and prevention training as required by law. Additional certificated and classified staff may also be included. The district suicide prevention policy and procedures shall be thoroughly reviewed at this time. Staff shall be expected to learn to identify potentially suicidal students, to assess the degree of risk, to take preventive precautions and to report suicide threats to the appropriate authorities.

Curriculum

The Board finds it appropriate that suicide prevention instruction be incorporated into the ninth and tenth grade curriculum. This instruction shall help students:

Understand how feelings of depression and despair can lead to suicide. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop new coping skills.

Recognize the warning signs of suicidal intentions in their friends.

Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.

Identify community resources where teenagers can get crisis intervention help.

Peer Counseling

The Board endorses the use of peer counselors who can provide an effective support system for students who are uncomfortable communicating with adults. Peer counselors shall be expected to have completed the suicide prevention curriculum and demonstrated that they are able to identify the warning signs of suicidal behavior, make contact rapidly, and get a suicidal student to adult help.

Legal Reference:

ALASKA STATUTES

~~Enrolled SB 137 (2012) (uncodified), Requiring suicide awareness and prevention training for certain school personnel~~

14.30.362 Suicide awareness and prevention training

Adopted: July 25, 2006

Revised 3/2013

Reviewed: 9-24-13 (This policy is new, 2nd/Final Reading will be on 10-1-13 Agenda which will be the date of Adoption)

Revised: 10-1-13

ANNETTE ISLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT