



YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School YOUTH SUICIDE AWARENESS and PREVENTION POLICY

Purpose

The YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and the YouthBuild Philadelphia community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to: provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.

YouthBuild Philadelphia notifies school employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy, and the policy is posted on the School's website.

Information Received in Confidence

In compliance with PA law and regulations, and in support of YouthBuild Philadelphia's suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents/guardians, the Executive Director or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of a student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Education

YouthBuild Philadelphia utilizes a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

- **Protocols for Administration of Student Education**
Students shall receive age-appropriate education on—
 - the importance of safe and healthy choices,
 - coping strategies,
 - how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as
 - help-seeking strategies for self or others, including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help.

Lessons contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.

- **Protocols for Administration of Employee Education**
All YouthBuild Philadelphia employees receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

They will participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years. (Best practices in suicide prevention have found that improved outcomes are more likely when staff training is spread out over an extended period of time, as opposed to one long training once every several years.)

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention is provided to School counselors, mental-health professionals and SAP Team Members.

Methods of Prevention

The methods of prevention utilized by YouthBuild Philadelphia include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

- **Early Identification Procedures – Risk Factors and Warning Signs**

Early identification of individuals with one or more suicidal risk factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs, is crucial to the YouthBuild Philadelphia's suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, School employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.

Risk factors refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

- Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:
 - Depression.
 - Substance abuse or dependence.
 - Previous suicide attempts.
 - Self injury.
- Personal Characteristics:
 - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
 - Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
 - Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
 - Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.
- Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:
 - Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
 - Disciplinary or legal problems.
 - Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
 - School or work issues.
 - Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
 - Exposure to peer suicide.

- Family Characteristics:
 - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
 - Family mental health problems.
 - Divorce/Death of parent/guardian.
 - Parental-Child relationship.

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. They include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose
 - Recklessness or risky behavior
 - Increased alcohol or drug use
 - Withdrawal from friends, family, or society
 - Dramatic mood changes.
- Referral Procedures

Any YouthBuild Philadelphia employee who has identified a student with one or more risk factors or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, refers the student to the Director of Case Management for further assessment and intervention.
 - Documentation

YouthBuild Philadelphia staff document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

Methods of Intervention

The methods of intervention utilized at YouthBuild Philadelphia include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in school, suicide attempts outside of school, and completed suicide.

The suicide intervention procedures used at the School address the development of an emotional or mental-health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

- Procedures for Students at Risk

A suicide assessment instrument may be used by trained mental-health staff such as counselors, psychologists, and counseling interns.

YouthBuild Philadelphia staff identifies mental-health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance.

- Mental-health service providers may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental-health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and primary care providers.

YouthBuild Philadelphia creates an emotional or mental-health safety plan to support a student and the student's family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

- Documentation

YouthBuild Philadelphia documents observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process, including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians, and mental-health service providers.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Resources

A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention can be found at—

PA Department of Education:

<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Act%2071/Youth%20Suicide%20Education%20Awareness%20and%20Prevention%20Curriculum.pdf>

Other resources—

American Psychological Association:

<http://www.apa.org/research/action/suicide.aspx>

Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS):

http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/Columbia_Suicide_Severity_Rating_Scale.pdf

CSSRS Introduction/Demonstration Webinars:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01P6id9wvig&feature=youtu.be>

Suicide Risk Assessment Reference Guide:

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/Suicide_Risk_Assessment_Reference_Guide.pdf

Flyer: Youth Suicide Warning Signs:

<http://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/healthcare-professionals>