



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

CRISIS INTERVENTION AT THE SCHOOL IN RESPONSE TO SUICIDE, DEATH, AND RELATED TRAUMAS

2950

Procedure No.

March 1, 2003

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide for effective utilization of school-based and non-school-based personnel when a crisis occurs in a school.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The Prince George's County Public School System has experienced deaths of students and staff members by suicide, homicide, and accident. The school community involved is usually traumatized by the death. Students and staff members have reacted with shock and grief, with some individuals being more seriously affected than others.

During the 1984-85 school year, the Superintendent appointed a committee to deal with student traumas, pressures, and options. The Division of Pupil Services personnel assisted in conducting a yearlong in-service effort, which resulted in the identification of School-Based Crisis Intervention Teams. During the 1985-86 school year, another committee was formed at the direction of the Superintendent to continue the focus on student/staff traumas, pressures, and options. The Crisis Intervention Coordinating Committee, formerly known as the Committee on Traumas, Pressures, and Options formalized plans and procedures regarding an appropriate response to a crisis in an individual school.

- III. **DEFINITIONS:** The following definitions apply to the contents of this Administrative Procedure:
 - A. **Crisis:** The sudden, unexpected death of or serious injury to a student or staff member by suicide, homicide, or accident which may result in a severe or chain reaction by the other members of the school population. A known suicide attempt and/or intent is also considered a crisis.
 1. **Severe Reaction:** A severe depressive or anxious reaction by students or staff members which is associated with feelings of grief related to loss of a family member, teacher, friend, or colleague (e.g., depression, acting-out, anger).
 2. **Associated Reaction:** An extreme depressive or anxious reaction by vulnerable students or staff members which may be precipitated by their previous experiences related to loss or death of others or to their own previous consideration of suicide.
 3. **Suicide Threat/Ideation:** The intent, verbally or in drawings or writings, by a student or staff member to commit suicide (e.g., giving away possessions, dangerous risky behavior). An individual's expressed thought about committing suicide or harming self without a specific threat or delineation.
 4. **Suicide Attempt:** The actual physical attempt made by a student or staff member to commit suicide.
 5. **Serious Injury:** Any injury which is life threatening or requires hospitalization.
 6. **Homicide/Homicidal Threat:** The intent to use deadly harm to a student or staff member.



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- B. School-Based Crisis Intervention Team: A team in each school composed of the principal or his/her designee, guidance counselor, teacher(s), nurse, student (grades 7-12), school psychologist, and/or pupil personnel worker. The purpose of the team is to provide assistance to the administration during the time of a school or an individual crisis and to provide leadership in developing a plan for crisis management and intervention programs and activities and to explore viable options to deal with the situation.
- C. Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team: A team composed of school psychologists, counselors, pupil personnel workers, and nurses who are deployed from the Department of Pupil Services to provide additional support and debriefing services to schools where there is a crisis.
- D. Postvention: Plan for support services and follow-up after the crisis.
- E. Parent: Parent, guardian, adoptive parent, or other person who has the permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for the supervision of a child under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- F. Responsible Adult: An adult 18 or older designated by the parent to assume temporary supervision of the child in a crisis situation.

IV. PROCEDURES:

Homicide, Accident, Serious Injury, or Death

- A. The following procedures are to be followed in cases involving homicide, accident, serious injury, or death.
 - 1. The principal, upon learning of a crisis in the school, is directed to:
 - a. Assemble the School-Based Crisis Intervention Team: (1) to assess the situation, (2) to develop an appropriate plan that includes when to notify staff and students, and (3) to identify appropriate school-based personnel to be utilized initially to intervene and counsel affected students or staff members.
 - b. Inform the Office of the Director for Pupil Services of the situation and of the plan developed and request additional support from the Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team, if needed.
 - c. Designate an area for students and staff members to meet, individually or in groups, for supportive counseling by school system personnel or for silent grieving.



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- d. Identify siblings, vulnerable students or staff members who may be caught up in a chain reaction to the crisis or are experiencing a severe reaction to the crisis.
 - e. Notify other schools where siblings, vulnerable students or staff members may attend or be located.
 - f. Notify the parents of students who after counseling or debriefing continue to exhibit a severe reaction to the crisis.
2. The Director for Pupil Services will:
 - a. Notify the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Academic Officer and the appropriate Regional Executive Directors.
 - b. Notify the Office of Communications.
 - c. Notify the Supervisor of Psychological Services, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, Supervisor of Guidance and Counseling Services, and Supervisor of Health Services within the Department of Pupil Services as indicated by the situation.
 - d. Work with the appropriate supervisory staff of Pupil Services to develop a plan, if necessary, for deployment of the Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team in a manner to best meet the needs of the school.
 3. When administratively requested, a Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team will be deployed to the school. This team will report to the principal or designee upon arrival at the school, and:
 - a. The principal or designee will brief the Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team on the current situation.
 - b. The principal or designee will assign the Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team areas of responsibility.
 - c. The Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team assisting the school will be responsible for submitting to the principal or designee the names of those students and staff members who may require additional counseling.
- B. Postvention: The School-Based Crisis Intervention Team will develop a plan for support services and follow-up after the crisis situation has occurred.



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Suicide Threat, Suicide Postvention, and Completed Suicide

- A. Suicide Threat: The following procedures are to be followed when an individual (student or staff member) expresses a written or verbal intent to commit suicide to either a staff member or to a student who informs a staff member.

When the Individual Is A Student:

1. Notify the principal or his/her designee IMMEDIATELY.
2. A staff member is to physically remain with the child until the parent/guardian or responsible adult designated by the parent arrives.
3. The parent/guardian is to be immediately contacted and asked to come to the school. The seriousness of the situation must be discussed with the parent/guardian by the principal or designee and a Pupil Services staff member. Resource information will be provided to the parent/guardian and/or the responsible adult with follow-up options such as family physician, psychiatric services, hospital emergency rooms, Suicide Hotline, etc. The parent may designate a responsible adult to come to the school. The seriousness of the situation must be discussed with the responsible adult designated.
 - a. If the parent cannot be contacted, after all efforts have been made, the individual designated as the *emergency contact* on the Family Card should be called. If, by the end of the school day, the emergency contact person cannot be reached, the Suicide Hotline should be contacted for assistance (1-800-422-0009).
 - b. In the case of a family whose first language is not English, assistance from the International Student Guidance Office (ISGO) must be sought.
 - c. If a parent is unwilling to accept the gravity of the situation and/or refuses to come to the school, the Suicide Hotline must be called for assistance. When the individual is endangering himself/herself or others, 911 should be called for assistance.
 - d. If the situation presents a serious injury or a medical emergency requiring immediate transportation of the individual to a medical facility, Administrative Procedure 5162, Emergency Care in Schools, is to be followed.
 - e. Protective Services should be contacted in the case of child abandonment or medical neglect by the parent/guardian. The PS-60 form (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Form) must be completed following an oral report to Protective Services.



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When the Individual Is A Staff Member:

The spouse, adult child, or other family member is to be contacted. Another staff member should remain with the person until he/she arrives. The supervisor or principal must also be informed. The Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team will be available upon request.

B. Postvention:

1. If the school has been affected, the School-Based Crisis Intervention Team should develop a school plan for support services and follow-up after the suicide threat or attempt.
2. The concerned student's case is to be referred to the Supplemental Services Team (SST) to determine program modifications or develop an individual support plan that is sensitive to his/her needs to be used when the student returns to school. The student's confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
3. The student's individual plan should be reviewed in at least 30 days. The plan should be modified as necessary.

C. Completed Suicide:

1. The School-Based Crisis Intervention Team should develop a postvention plan for handling the needs of students and staff following the completed suicide. The Pupil Services Crisis Intervention Team will be available to assist as needed.
2. Memorializing the suicide act should be minimal. Avoid activities which may be interpreted by youth as glorifying the act of suicide or giving the impression that it is an acceptable option.

Follow-Up Procedures

Any student returning to school who has been assisted by the above procedures is to be referred to the Supplemental Services Team (SST) to determine if additional support is needed or if a modification in the program is to be made. **Students may not be excluded from school while awaiting a physician's letter or release.**

- V. **RELATED PROCEDURES:** Administrative Procedure 5162, Emergency Care in Schools, dated August 1, 1994.
- VI. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure originates with the Department of Pupil Services and regular updating will be accomplished by the Department as may be necessary.



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- VII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 2950, dated November 1, 1986.
- VIII. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 1, 2003

Approved by:
Iris T. Metts
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment: Form PS-60, Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Form

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13