

## **Suicide Attempt – Procedures for Assistance**

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In the event that a suicide attempt occurs at school, these are the steps which need to be taken as soon as possible:

### **Immediate:**

- The person who discovers the situation needs to tend to the medical emergency. Apply first aid or call for a staff member who is qualified in first aid or CPR. Call for back-up help from another staff member.
- At no time should the student be left alone. Every consideration should be given to making the situation as non-threatening to the student as possible.
- If an ambulance is needed, have a staff member call 911. If the student is taken by ambulance, a staff member should accompany the student to the hospital. If possible, take the student's medical record card. The staff member should remain with the student until a parent/guardian arrives.
- The person who discovers the emergency needs to immediately notify the principal or designate, who will determine the need to activate the Crisis Response Team.
- The principal or designate will immediately inform the parent.

### **Secondary:**

- If a classroom teacher is involved in providing assistance, the principal or designate will need to find a substitute.
- If the student is taken to the hospital and treated for superficial symptoms and then released by the hospital, or in cases where the student refuses treatment, the accompanying staff member needs to document the date, time and individual who released the student from the hospital, and the fact that the student refused treatment.
- Once the student is stabilized, there needs to be a detailed and chronological documentation of the interventions which the school has attempted to support the student.
- All information pertaining to a potential suicide is to be considered confidential within the school. The principal or members of the Crisis Response Team will determine who also needs to be informed. Depending on the circumstance, the principal may need to contact the appropriate superintendent.

- It is essential that all school staff involved be debriefed immediately after the incident, by a qualified member of the Crisis Response Team, such as the school psychologist.
- In conjunction with the crisis team, the principal needs to determine the level/type of support from the Crisis Response Team. Even if the crisis team is not activated, they should be informed of the incident.

Any staff member who has direct contact with a student who has expressed any suicidal threat/ideation must take immediate action. The following represent best practices for assistance procedures.

Irrespective of the degree (indirect to direct threat) or form (verbal, written, artwork, etc.) the staff member who had direct contact needs to complete the following initial steps:

- Make a judgement as to whether the student is making an indirect/disguised threat or a specific direct desire-to-die threat, in order to ensure the student's immediate safety. If it is a direct threat, do not leave the student alone!
- Inform the principal of the threat.
- Chronologically document the threat (date/time/circumstance/ type of threat/staff member involved/school action and follow-up taken etc.).

### **Indirect/Disguised Threat Procedures:**

- The principal or designate should review the indirect/disguised threat with appropriate school based support staff (school guidance counsellor and/or Child Guidance Clinic staff), for appropriate follow-up and supports.
- The indirect threat should be immediately discussed with the parent/legal guardian.
- If the student is already receiving clinical supports within or outside of the school division, with parental permission, information concerning the indirect threat should be shared.
- In addition to the initial documentation regarding the threat, follow-up documentation outlining all actions taken is necessary

### **Direct Threat Procedures:**

- At no time is the student to be left alone.
- The staff member should try to make the situation as non-threatening to the student as possible.

- The staff member should talk to the student privately, assessing the level of risk. Refer to section on What to Do and Say.
- Immediate contact needs to be made with the parent/legal guardian.
- If the student is not already receiving clinical supports, they will need to be referred for appropriate mental health support and evaluation.
- If the student is already receiving clinical supports within or outside of the school division, with parental permission, information concerning the direct threat should be shared.
- Activation of the crisis team can assist in the development of a specific action plan. It is very appropriate to make emergency contact with the Child Guidance Clinic area service director, the school psychologist, or the school social worker, for assistance in assessment and direction. Even if the crisis team or school based clinical support is not activated, they should be informed of the incident.
- Until some risk estimation of the situation is completed, the student should not leave the school unless accompanied by a parent/legal guardian, or a person clearly designated by the parent/legal guardian. Before the student's return, the school should follow-up with the guardian, as to what actions have been taken, the supports in place, and to identify a school based plan of action.
- If a parent is unavailable or unwilling to provide appropriate follow-up, and the student is not able to be maintained in the school, it may be necessary to call Child and Family Services or another agency for assistance.
- It is essential that all school staff involved in the incident be debriefed immediately after the incident, by a qualified member of the crisis team, such as the school psychologist.

