



3209 SUICIDE PREVENTION GUIDELINES

Policy Type: Human Resources
Applies To: All Staff, Students, Volunteers, Visitors
Approved By: LCS Head of Schools
Policy Reviewed: every 2 years
Adopted: 06 2020
Revisions: 08 2023

1. RESPONSIBILITY AND SCOPE

- (a) This document is intended for all LCS staff, volunteers and anyone working with students. Every staff member must be made aware of this protocol in a timely fashion.
- (b) Each staff member, coach and volunteer supervising students, must sign off indicating that they have received and understood the LCS protocol on suicide prevention. It is imperative that everyone follow the suicide prevention protocol and involve a school counsellor and/or administrator to assist those students who may be 'at risk'.
- (c) Each staff member, coach and volunteer supervising students must understand that when students exhibit warning signs they are not seeking attention, rather, they are seeking help. Individuals who are suicidal don't want to die; they just want their pain to end.

2. EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STAFF:

- (a) If you feel a student is 'at risk', present your concerns to the counsellor and/or administrator as soon as possible. Do not wait until after school before sharing this information – an assessment may need to be done that day.
- (b) If you feel the risk for suicide is imminent, do not leave the student alone.
- (c) If the student has taken an overdose of medication or poison, immediately contact the school's first aid attendant or 911 (whichever is faster). Wait for that person to arrive to tend to the student, and then seek out the administrator.
- (d) If you have any evidence to support your concerns, provide it to the counsellor (evidence of self harming behaviour, letters/stories/info. provided by others etc.)
- (e) If a student discloses their suicide ideation to you, acknowledge their pain, and thank them for sharing how they're feeling (it's a sign of trust). Tell them you will get them help, but do not promise to keep it a secret.
- (f) Students just want you to listen, not make judgments, try to solve their problems or give advice. Telling them that 'your feelings will pass', or 'you've got so much to live for' or saying 'it's just a phase' will not be helpful to someone in this state.

- (g) You personally do not need to verify whether or not a student is 'at risk', a school counsellor will determine this, and the best possible support you can give a student is by getting them to the counsellor as soon as possible.

3. COMMON WARNING SIGNS:

- (a) Although youth suicide and suicidal behaviour may appear to happen without warning, in reality, students almost always send signals. The key to these signs is a **CHANGE** in behaviour. Keep in mind that students may experience many of the signs without being at risk for suicide.
- (b) A school counsellor will assess the level of risk through the completion of a suicide assessment and then make any necessary referrals.
- ☐ Talking or joking about suicide and death
 - ☐ Increased and/or heavy use of alcohol or other drugs
 - ☐ Making final arrangements, such as giving away prized possessions
 - ☐ Engaging in risk-taking behaviour
 - ☐ Exhibiting changes in school or social behaviour such as:
 - ☐ Change in attendance
 - ☐ Decline in academic performance
 - ☐ Inability to concentrate
 - ☐ Failure to complete assignments
 - ☐ Lack of interest/withdrawal/lethargy
 - ☐ Change in relationship with classmates
 - ☐ Increase in irritability or aggressiveness
 - ☐ Wide mood swings
 - ☐ Unexpected displays of emotion
 - ☐ Evidence of self-harm (not necessarily a sign of suicidality)
 - ☐ Despairing attitude
 - ☐ Preoccupation with death and suicide (e.g. writing about it, drawing pictures)
 - ☐ Behavioural changes
 - ☐ Sleep disturbance, loss of appetite
 - ☐ Loss of interest in previously important relationships
 - ☐ Changes in appearance and personal care
- (c) It is important to understand that a student's risk level can change from day to day. Concerns about a student are often brought to staff by peers concerned about their friend's well-being. Treat this information as significant – students are often more likely to tell a friend about their suicide ideation than an adult.

4. INCREASED RISK FACTORS:

- (a) Risk factors are those factors and conditions that are associated with an elevated risk for suicide and suicidal behaviour.
- (b) Recent reviews of research confirm that there are a number of factors that have been linked to suicide and suicidal behaviours among youth. These include:
 - ☐ Mental health disorders, particularly mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, eating disorders and behaviour disorders. Co-occurring disorders (more than one disorder and/or in combination with a substance use disorder) are also very common among suicidal youth.
 - ☐ Previous suicidal behaviour, including prior suicide attempts and behavioural rehearsal.
 - ☐ Hopelessness, aggression, recklessness and impulsivity.
 - ☐ Family factors, including high levels of parent-child conflict, parental mental illness and a family history of suicidal behaviour can elevate the risk for suicide among youth.
 - ☐ A history of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse.
 - ☐ Stressful life events, especially in combination with existing vulnerabilities. These commonly include: interpersonal conflict, rejection, failure, humiliation, victimization (victim of bullying) and loss.
 - ☐ Exposure to a peer suicide is also a potential risk factor among some youth with pre-existing vulnerabilities.
 - ☐ Identifying as gay, lesbian or transgender can also be a potential risk factor.
 - ☐ Sensationalized media reports about suicide and having access to the means for suicide are additional risk factors for youth suicide.
- (c) The school counsellor will assist the student in many ways. A school counsellor will complete a suicide risk assessment, parents will be called and where appropriate, intervention strategies will be put in place.

5. REVISIONS

- (a) These guidelines are to be reviewed annually.
- (b) Any changes to these guidelines will be reviewed by LCS legal counsel and administration will ensure they meet requirements of the Ministry of Education and Childcare independent school inspection requirements.

RELATED POLICIES

3202 Student Supervision Policy
 3203 Child Abuse & Reporting Protocol
 3204 Harassment & Bullying Prevention
 3205 Violence & Threat Risk Assessment

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