

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND TRAINING

The Whitebead Board of Education recognizes that self-destructive behavior and suicide occurs among children and adolescents in our country. Students identified as self-destructive are in need of appropriate help as quickly as possible. The primary obligations of school personnel working with a depressed or suicidal student are support, calling the 911 emergency telephone number, law enforcement, the Department of Human Services, parental contact, and referral. Notification must be made immediately upon determining that a risk of harm exists. To that end, student confidentiality may be waived in life-threatening situations.

The district shall provide district-wide training to all staff on a biennial basis addressing suicide awareness and prevention. The training provided shall utilize curriculum provided by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The course outline for the curriculum shall be made available to the public online through the school district's website. Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, the district shall:

1. Provide a suicide preventing training program which includes as a core element evidence-based approaches;
2. Provide the curriculum made available by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; or
3. Provide a suicide prevention training program that is selected by the school district from a list maintained by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to school district staff that addresses suicide awareness and prevention. The training may be combined with any other training program provided by the school district addressing bullying prevention.

With the intent of contributing to the prevention of suicide among students where possible, the board directs that an adolescent suicide awareness program be initiated, including:

1. In-service education--to increase the awareness of all building staff about the seriousness of the problem and possible suicide "warning signs",
2. Establishment of referral/response procedures in each school--to facilitate assisting students identified as possibly suicidal,
3. Infusion into the curriculum of appropriate understandings and information--to help students deal appropriately with feelings, to recognize possible suicide "warning signs" in themselves and others, and to increase awareness of alternatives and resources available for assistance,
4. Parental awareness--to increase understandings of parents about the problem and the resources available, and
5. Procedures in each school for dealing appropriately with tragedies--to ease the impact on students, staff, and community in the event of a student suicide.

District personnel cannot be expected to treat the suicidal adolescent. Rather, they need to recognize that they are in a position to aid in the identification of young people who may be prone to suicide, and to intervene in order to link these young people and their families to treatment programs in the community. In addition, school personnel need to be prepared to relate to suicidal young people following a suicide attempt, and to deal with the intense emotions/reactions of the school community following an actual suicide.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, training will be provided to students in grades seven through 12 to address suicide awareness and prevention.