

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

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The Bangor School Committee believes that suicide prevention and intervention are priorities in maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment for students. This policy is an overview, companion document to the Bangor School Department Suicide Prevention Protocol.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. The Bangor School Department will:

- a) Recognize that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes.
- b) Further recognize that suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young people.
- c) Understand the ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing suicide.
- d) Acknowledge the role of the school in providing an environment which helps to foster positive youth development.

The suicide prevention policy and protocol are meant to be paired with support from the Guidance Department, social workers, administrators, teachers, and nurses, as well as the Student Support Team (SST). Depending on the school and the level, SST teams will consist of administrators, school counselors, social workers, school nurse, school psychologist, and teachers. The policy and protocol covers actions that take place in the school, at school-sponsored functions and activities, and at school sponsored out-of-school events where school staff are present. The policy and protocol applies to the entire school community, including educators, school and district staff, students, parents, guardians, and volunteers. The policy and protocol will also cover appropriate school responses to suicidal or high-risk behaviors that take place outside of the school environment.

### PROTOCOLS

The Bangor School Department maintains a suicide prevention protocol. All Maine schools are required to have a suicide prevention protocol by the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The Bangor School Department Suicide Prevention Protocol follows the Maine Suicide Prevention Program and NAMI Maine sample protocol template and includes sections on rationale, suicide intervention protocols within the School Crisis Response Plan or Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, guidelines for when any risk of suicide has been raised, suicide intervention protocol chart, procedures for assisting the suicidal student, procedures for assisting other students during a crisis, communication and messaging, guidelines for a suicide attempt off school premises and on school premises, guidelines for a transition/re-entry plan, prevention, postvention, case management, suicide intervention form, model crisis response agreement, resources, training guidelines, and youth suicide prevention programming. The Bangor School Department Suicide Prevention Protocol is located in the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and is contained in the public portion of the plan found on the Bangor School Department website at <https://www.bangorschools.net/bsd-public-emergency-management-plan-access/>.

The Superintendent or designee will convene a Suicide Prevention Committee annually to review the latest information from the Maine Department of Education, Maine Suicide Prevention Program, and NAMI Maine. In addition, this Committee will review the Bangor School Department Suicide Prevention Protocol to recommend any changes prior to the approval of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan in October. The Suicide Prevention Committee will include representation from the Bangor School



Committee, Administration, School Counselors, Social Workers, School Nurses, School Physician, School Psychologists, Teachers, Parents, Students, and Mental Health Providers with expertise in suicide prevention.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

All staff will receive initial (upon hire) and regular professional development as it relates to recognizing at-risk behaviors and suicide threats, referrals to the appropriate personnel, response procedures, postvention, and resources for youth suicide prevention. The training will also include information about student groups who are at higher risk for suicide such as those with mental and/or substance abuse disorders, those who are experiencing homelessness, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The Bangor School Department will also have at least seven school personnel who have successfully completed the full-day suicide prevention and intervention training commonly referred to as “gatekeeper” training. These “gatekeeper” staff members will be available as resources for other staff implementing the policy and the protocol.

### **PREVENTION**

#### **Policy Implementation**

The Director of Pupil Services will serve as the district suicide prevention coordinator for the Bangor School Department. The district suicide prevention coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of the policy for the entire School Department.

Each school will also have a suicide-prevention point of contact for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. The school counselor or social worker in each school will serve as the suicide prevention coordinator. In the event that the school counselor or social worker cannot be reached, the Student Support Program personnel for each school and the principals for each school will act as the suicide prevention coordinator.

#### **Publication and Distribution**

The suicide prevention policy will be distributed annually and is to be included in all student and teacher handbooks as well as on the school website. The protocol will be located in the Bangor School Department Comprehensive Emergency Plan.

#### **Procedures for Early Identification**

The school staff along with the Guidance Department and the Student Support Team (SST) will work together to identify students who demonstrate risk factors for suicide. Staff will be made aware of risk factors, who to contact when there is a concern, and the check-in procedure with the student and family when a concern is raised.

#### **Referrals**

Students exhibiting risk factors will be referred to the grade-appropriate school counselor, who will then assess the situation and make a SST referral. All school counselors, social workers, and SST staff will be familiar with resources and agencies that may be called to assist a student with thoughts of suicide. The student’s family will be informed about any concerns raised by school staff and will be given resources to seek help if needed.

### **INTERVENTION**

When a student is identified as potentially suicidal, the student and the student’s family will be contacted by the school counselor or social worker to assess the risk and facilitate the referral if necessary. If a school counselor or social worker is not available, an SST representative and an administrator will fill this role until a school counselor can be reached.

#### **For Students at Risk**

- 1) School staff will stay in contact with the student until a family member or help can be reached.



- 2) The principal, school counselor or social worker, and SST team member will be notified as soon as possible. If a student verbalizes suicidal ideation during class, the teacher will ask the student to stay in class. The teacher will contact the school counselor or social worker and the principal to help assess the situation. The student should not be allowed to log out of class (if possible) until someone at the home can be reached by the school counselor or principal.
- 3) A phone call should be made to the family with the school counselor or social worker, the principal, and SST on the line. If the student answers and no one is at home, the school counselor will speak to the student while the principal or SST representative tries to reach a family member. It is possible that emergency services may need to be called.

### **Parental Notification & Involvement**

The principal, SST representative, school counselor, or social worker will contact the parent/guardian as soon as possible after a student expresses suicidal thoughts. If the student has exhibited any type of suicidal behavior, “means of restriction” or limiting the child’s access to mechanisms for carrying out a suicide attempt will be discussed. Staff will inform the parent of suicide prevention resources in their area and encourage the parent to seek help. During the conversation, the principal, school counselor, social worker, or SST representative will assess whether there is further risk of harm due to parent or guardian notification.

If the suicide threat is made during afterschool hours, families and students are encouraged to call a crisis line, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, provided to them in the student handbook and to seek emergency medical help. Contact should be made with school the next school day so support may be put in place at school.

## **METHODS OF RESPONDING TO A SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT**

### **Suicide Attempt**

The school counselor will contact the family to offer any needed help. Mental health resources that the family may use will be discussed. A SST referral will be made to give the student additional in-school support. The school counselor or social worker will also reach out to any other students who may have been impacted by the suicide attempt.

### **Suicide**

The Crisis Team will meet to discuss the implementation of the Suicide Intervention Protocol found in the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

- 1) *Verify the death.* Staff will talk with the parent/guardian or police to gather more information. The death should not be labeled a suicide until the cause of death has been confirmed.
- 2) *Assess the situation.* The Crisis Team will meet to consider how severely the death is likely to affect other students and to determine which students are most likely to be affected.
- 3) *Share information.* Inform the staff who have contact with the student that a death has occurred.
- 4) *Avoid Suicide Contagion.* It should be explained to staff that one purpose of trying to identify and give services to other high risk students is to prevent another death. The team will work together to identify other students who are most likely to be significantly affected by the death. The warning signs and reporting procedures will be discussed with staff again.
- 5) *Initiate Support Services.* Students identified as being more likely to be affected by the death will be assessed by a school employed mental health professional to determine the level of support needed. The team will coordinate services for the students and staff in need of individual and small group counseling.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES**

When a student expresses suicidal thoughts:

- 1) Contact the school counselor or social worker.



- 2) If the school counselor or social worker cannot be reached, contact the principal and the school SST representative.
- 3) The school counselor or social worker will contact the student's family.
- 4) If the threat is deemed immediate, the school counselor, social worker, principal, or SST representative will call home. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the school counselor or social worker will remain in contact with the student while the principal or SST representative calls emergency services.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Staff

*Lifelines: A Comprehensive Suicide Responsiveness Program for Youth* – [violencepreventionworks.org](http://violencepreventionworks.org)

*Making Educators Partners in Youth Suicide Prevention* – [sptsuniversity.org](http://sptsuniversity.org)

*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention* – [afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

*Suicide SAFE App for iPhone and Droid* – [samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

*The Trevor Project* – [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)

### Students

*Maine Crisis Hotline* – 1-888-568-1121

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* – The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis or their friends and loved ones. Call 1-800-273-8255.

*The Trevor Lifeline* – Suicide prevention lifeline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people. Available 24 hours a day. Call 1-866-488-7386.

*Lifeline Crisis Chat* – [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/lifelinechat.aspx](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/gethelp/lifelinechat.aspx)

Cross Reference: Bangor School Department Suicide Intervention Protocols (located in the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan)

Legal Reference: 20-A MRS subsection 4502 (5-B)  
Maine Department of Education Rule Chapter 38

ADOPTED: February 26, 2020

