

Suicide Prevention Policy

Adopted On: 6/27/2023. Last Reviewed On: 4/9/2024

Last Updated On: 4/9/2024

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 school is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment that enhances the well-being of students through education, awareness, and access to mental health resources. This policy is aligned with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779.1 and applies to all students enrolled at Destinations Career Academy of Georgia.

I. Prevention

1. Staff Training

At the start of the school year, all school personnel who interact with students, including teachers, counselors, and administrators, shall receive annual training on recognizing the warning signs of suicide, how to address suicide ideation, and how to refer students for further assessment or intervention.

Training will include suicide awareness, risk factors, and referral procedures. This will be facilitated via online training modules that align with the standards established by the Georgia Department of Education

2. Student Education

The school will provide students with age-appropriate education on suicide prevention through the school's health and wellness programs. This education will focus on promoting mental health, identifying warning signs of suicide, and how to seek help for themselves or peers. Programs will be incorporated in the health/PE class and/or homeroom collaborative time. Resources, such as hotlines and virtual counseling services, will be made accessible to all students.

3. Outreach to Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians will be educated annually on the signs of suicide risk and prevention strategies. Resources and training opportunities will be provided to families, ensuring they are equipped to support their children's mental health. A suicide prevention guide, including contact information for support services, will be available to all LCs and families via email and direct access with the school counselor.

II. Intervention

1. Student Self-Referral

The school shall provide multiple, confidential ways for students to report concerns for themselves or their peers, including anonymous reporting mechanisms. Virtual students

will have access to online forms and direct communication tools, such as chat or video conferencing with school counselors, to report mental health concerns.

2. Risk Assessment Protocols

Any school personnel who suspect a student is at risk of suicide shall immediately report their concern to a designated school counselor or administrator. The counselor will then conduct a thorough risk assessment to determine the level of intervention needed. In cases where there is an imminent risk of harm, parents/guardians will be notified, and emergency services may be contacted to ensure the safety of the student.

3. Referral Procedures

Students identified as at-risk will be referred to appropriate mental health services, either within the school's virtual counseling program or external community resources. The school will work with parents/guardians to connect students with mental health professionals who can provide immediate and ongoing care.

4. Emergency Response

If a student expresses suicidal ideation during an online class or virtual meeting, staff will follow emergency response procedures, which include staying in contact with the student, notifying the appropriate school administrator, and contacting parents/guardians or emergency services, as necessary.

III. Postvention

1. Crisis Response Team

The school leadership team has been established as the Crisis Response Team responsible for responding to any student death by suicide. The team includes the head of school, academic administrators, counselors, the community engagement specialist, and communications personnel. This team will coordinate communication, provide grief counseling, and develop a plan to support the school community.

2. Communication

In the event of a student suicide, the Head of School, Boards Executive Director, and board chair will work with local authorities to communicate appropriately with students, staff, and parents/guardians. Communication will be sensitive and focus on promoting mental health resources.

3. Counseling Services

- The school will offer immediate and ongoing counseling services to affected students and staff after a suicide event. Virtual and in-person options will be provided for those in need of support.
- The school will work with external mental health organizations to ensure that all students and staff have access to grief counseling and suicide prevention resources.

4. Review and Follow-Up

- After any suicide-related event, the school will conduct a review of the situation and adjust policies and procedures as necessary to improve its suicide prevention efforts.
- The school will continue to monitor and support affected students to ensure their well-being and recovery.

IV. Resources

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741
- Local Mental Health Services: [List available virtual mental health services for students]
- School Counselor Contact Information: [Insert school counselor contact details]

V. Adoption of Policy

This policy is adopted by [Virtual School Name] and will be reviewed annually. All staff and students will be made aware of the policy, and it will be made available on the school's website.

Supporting Documentation

- A copy of this policy will be uploaded to the school's official website and included in the student handbook upon approval by the board of directors.
- Staff training logs, educational materials for students, and parental outreach programs will be maintained as part of the school's compliance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779.1.

This policy reflects the virtual school's commitment to safeguarding the mental health of its students and ensuring proper response mechanisms are in place in the case of suicide risk or crisis.

Additional Resource - <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/GaDOE%20Model%20Policy%20for%20Suicide%20Awareness%2c%20Prevention%2c%20Intervention%20and%20Postvention%20v3.pdf>