



STUDENTS

5141.4

Child Abuse and Prevention of Youth Suicide

The Montville Board of Education, in recognizing that child abuse is a criminal offense and that youth suicide is an enormous tragedy, directs the establishment of procedures and guidelines to deal with such an offense and circumstances in accordance in Connecticut Public Act 89-169 and the earlier Public Act 216, as well as C.G.S 17-38a and 17b; also, Public Act 96-246.

Policy Adopted: 6/19/90
Revised: 1/21/92
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Suicide Prevention Guidelines

When a staff member in the public school system is confronted with a situation in which a student makes a statement of suicidal thinking, or it appears that an attempt at suicide is possible, the following actions will take place:

1. The staff member immediately will refer the student to the appropriate counselor or psychologist.
2. In the event the staff member perceives that a student has taken action which creates a medical emergency, the school nurse will be notified immediately and emergency medical procedures will be followed.
3. The counselor will notify the principal and the school nurse and seek the intervention of the department of student services worker--either the school psychologist or the school social worker.
4. The counselor and/or department of student services worker will meet with the student immediately for the purpose of establishing sequential facts or events leading to the crisis. At no time during this process is the student to be left alone.
5. If the student is not found to be suicidal, the parents will be notified of the referral and of all conclusions reached.
6. If the student is found to be suicidal, immediate contact will be made with a parent or guardian and a conference will be held the same day.

During the conference, the parent or guardian will be advised that an immediate psychiatric evaluation is needed.

Under no circumstances is a student allowed to go home alone. The student must be released only to a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult.

If reasonable attempts to reach the parent, guardian, or other responsible adult in whose custody the student may be released are not successful, the case will be treated as a medical emergency and arrangements will be made to transport the student to an area hospital emergency room or mental health facility.

If the student requires medical attention, he/she will be transported immediately to an area hospital.

A detailed report will be written within twenty-four hours by the department worker who assumes responsibility for the case. The report shall include:

- name of the student.
- name of the staff member(s) involved.
- time and date of all conferences.
- summary of all conferences.
- recommendations made to parents, student, and building staff.

Follow-up contact will be in accordance with the recommendations. A report will be written indicating those activities performed to follow through and ensure the safety and well-being of the student.

A copy of all reports will be submitted to the parents, the principal, and the director of special services.

Failure on the part of the family to take seriously and provide for the safety of the student in case of potential suicide will be considered emotional neglect and reported to the Department of Children and Families. (cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse/Neglect).

If as a result of suicidal activity a need exists for changes in the student's program, the school's planning and placement team will convene and consult with the student's mental health professional, the parent(s) or guardian, appropriate outside facility staff members and, if feasible, the student to plan the student's educational program.

The school social worker or department of student services worker who assumes responsibility for the case will maintain contact with the student's mental health professionals to support programming needs and follow-up procedures.

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Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect

This regulation is intended to safeguard children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through injury and neglect, and to ensure a nurturing and safe environment. Reports should be made where there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe that any child under the age of eighteen:

1. has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him/her (other than accidental means) by a person responsible for the child's health, welfare, or care, or by a person given access to the child.
2. has injuries which are at variance with the explanation given of their occurrence.
3. is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment.
4. has been neglected in one or more of the following ways:
 - A. Has been abandoned;
 - B. Is being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, emotionally, or morally;
 - C. Is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances, or associations injurious to the child's well-being;
 - D. Is in danger of being abused even though one does not have reasonable cause to suspect or believe any such abuse has actually occurred.

Reporting of Child Abuse by School Employees

Any nurse, teacher, principal, counselor, social worker or psychologist who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused by a school employee must report the abuse within twenty-four hours to the Department of Children and Families, or to a law enforcement agency; and, to the superintendent of schools.

1. The superintendent shall immediately notify the child's parents or guardian, and make an oral report immediately by telephone or otherwise to the Commissioner of Children and Families and the local police department or the state police.
2. This report must be followed within forty-eight hours by a written report to the Commissioner

of Children and Families and the local police department or the state police.

3. The report must name the child, parents, child's age, nature and extent of injuries, the name of the suspected school employee, and any other information that might be helpful in protecting the child.
4. The superintendent is obligated to investigate the report, and if he or she find evidence of child abuse by a school employee, must notify the child's parents or guardian, the local or state police, and the Commissioner of Children and Families.
5. When an investigation produces such evidence, and the employee in question is in a position requiring a certificate, the superintendent will suspend the certified professional employee with pay and without termination of benefits, provided he or she notifies the board of education of the reasons for the suspension within seventy-two hours.
6. The suspension remains in effect until the school board takes action under the Teacher Tenure Act.
7. If a certified school employee is convicted of a crime involving child abuse, the state's attorney must notify the superintendent of schools and the State Board of Education upon conviction. The State Board of Education is obligated to commence proceedings to revoke certification in such event.
8. The superintendent is authorized to delegate his or her responsibilities for receiving and making reports, notifying and receiving notification, and conducting investigations to a designee acting in his or her behalf.

Removal of Clothing

In the event that visual confirmation of injury or neglect is necessary, only the school nurse or school doctor may request or remove the child's clothing. Neither a school nurse or a school doctor may remove or insist that a child remove clothing to confirm suspected abuse or neglect, except in those circumstances where there is a need for emergency medical treatment. The school nurse or school doctor may request that a child remove clothing when the following three conditions exist:

1. A child, by word or action, has identified a particular injury, the extent of which can only be determined by removing the child's clothing.
2. The examination is necessary to determine whether medical attention is required and not merely to confirm suspected abuse.
3. The request is made in such a manner that the child clearly understands that compliance with the request is optional and that no adverse consequences will result from a refusal to comply.

In addition to the school nurse or school doctor, a staff member of the same sex as the child will

be present during such an examination.

Emergency Care

If a school nurse or school medical advisor is not readily available and there is a need for emergency first aid, other public school personnel who have completed a course in first aid may render emergency first aid to the child. (A person providing such aid is not liable for civil damages for any personal injuries which result from acts or omissions in rendering the emergency first aid.)

Transportation for a child to a hospital in an emergency situation that may be a result of abuse or neglect will be provided to the same extent as it would be provided to any other child in need of emergency service.

Role of Department of Children and Families

1. Determination of Need (In-school Interview)

If the student protection team, or the principal in the absence of a team decision, believes that an interview in the school setting may be necessary in order to protect the child, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) must be notified as early in the school day as possible. DCF will advise school personnel whether the child must be interviewed in the school.

If the DCF determines that a school interview is appropriate, the DCF social worker will notify the building principal prior to the school visit. The DCF worker will provide the building principal or principal's designee with DCF identification upon request.

Should the social worker not arrive as scheduled and school personnel decide that the retention of the child beyond the school day is necessary to protect the child's physical well-being, the principal or his/her designee must attempt to notify the parents of the child. If reasonable attempts to notify the parents fail, the principal will notify the police of the child's retention.

2. Process (In-school Interview)

The school will provide a private place for the DCF worker to interview the child. School personnel will not be part of the interview unless specifically asked to do so. In either event, the investigation is to be conducted solely by the DCF worker.

If during the course of the investigation the DCF worker requests the removal of clothing worn by the child, the examination will be made by the school nurse or school doctor in the presence of the DCF worker and in accordance with the procedures outlined above.

3. Removal from the home and/or school

If the DCF has probable cause to believe that the child is suffering from serious physical illness or injury or is in immediate danger from his/her surroundings, and that immediate removal from such surroundings is necessary to ensure the child's safety, the DCF may remove or authorize a law enforcement official to remove the child from such surroundings without the consent of the child's parent or guardian. If removal of the child

from the school is determined to be necessary, the DCF shall inform the building principal of the removal.

It is the responsibility of the DCF to notify the parents of any activities or actions taken by the DCF following the interview.

Follow-up Procedures for the School Staff

1. Notification of parents

If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse does not reside in the home with the child, the school psychologist, the principal or the team designee will notify the parent that a referral has been made.

If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is in the home and/or in the judgement of the principal and/or student protection team the parent may punish the child for revealing the abuse, the notification of the parent of the child abuse referral will be done by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) worker.

2. Written report

A written report (DCF-136) is sent to the DCF Regional Office within forty-eight (48) hours and is signed by the principal, psychologist, or student assistance team designee. A copy is sent to the director of student services and a copy is kept in the principal's confidential file.

Communication will be established and maintained between the DCF worker and the school social worker who will confer with the school staff as necessary.

Procedures for use with the Mentally Retarded

In case of suspected abuse or neglect of mentally retarded adults between 18-21 years of age, oral and written reports of suspected abuse will be made to the Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Handicapped and Developmentally Disabled Persons.

In-house procedure for working with the Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Handicapped follow those for the Department of Children and Families.

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