

Board of Education Policy 1.5100/3.6400/4.3000/7.2700
Administrative Procedure

Crisis or Sudden Traumatic Events

An appropriate response to crisis in the lives of students requires cooperative efforts on the part of school personnel. The Catawba County School System has in place a comprehensive manual of established safety and emergency procedures (1994). Supplemental to this manual some emergencies such as suicide or the threat of suicide, the sudden death of a student, or a serious bus accident require additional direction. To meet the needs of those in these types of crisis, the objective of the following procedures is to facilitate response in a prompt and caring manner and to enhance the school's return as quickly as possible to a normal academic environment.

Specific circumstances may differ; however, certain elements are common and can elicit strong reactions from those affected. It is critical that schools anticipate and plan for effective ways to respond to common crisis situations. It is recommended that each school make it their goal to provide *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training* for their staff and/or key personnel.

Every school should have a crisis intervention team who can provide leadership for planning and carrying out the plan when there is need. Often this school team will be able to address needs which develop in a crisis. When there is need for additional assistance, a system team comprised of the Behavior Management Specialist, school social workers, school psychologists, Exceptional Children personnel, and other support personnel as needed may be called upon. This team will become involved at the discretion of the school principal or crisis team chairperson or the superintendent.

SUICIDE

Threats, even *talk* about suicide, by students should be taken seriously by school personnel. Parents/guardians should *always* be notified when their child indicates that s/he is considering suicide. Schools have a legal responsibility to follow up in these instances.

Procedures

Threatened Suicide

1. Consider *all* threats or talk about harming one's self seriously.
2. *Do not* leave the student alone at school or allow the student to leave school alone.
3. Notify your school counselor and the principal who will work together to assist with the classroom if necessary and make contact with the parent/guardian immediately.
4. If the student is threatening suicide, isolate the situation by:
 - removing other students from the classroom, or
 - having the counselor or principal remove the student in crisis from the classroom to a private area of the school
5. The principal or the counselor will contact system-level personnel for consultation. (Director of Student Services, Director of Exceptional Children, Student Assistance Coordinator, Behavior Management Specialist, and a superintendent)

6. The counselor or principal will guide the parent toward available mental health resources.
7. In the event the student is not offered outside help by the parent/guardian, a Department of Social Services neglect referral may be in order.
8. Document the incidents, times/places, contacts made and steps taken. Be specific.
9. Maintain confidentiality of appropriate information.

Attempted Suicide

1. Consider *all* attempts to harm one's self seriously.
2. *Do not* leave the student alone at school or allow the student to leave the school alone.
3. Notify your school counselor and the principal if the student is in the process of an attempt.
4. The school principal and counselor together will isolate the situation by:
 - removing other students from the classroom, or if possible,
 - having the counselor or principal remove the student in crisis from the classroom to a private area of the school, or if a weapon is involved
 - contacting law enforcement
5. If an attempt has *been* made and there appears to be a need for on-site first aid, contact the appropriate school designee. A decision may then need to be made whether or not to call 911.
6. The staff person who has the best rapport with the student should be utilized to assist in communicating with the student in crisis in order to try and de-escalate the situation.
7. The counselor, principal, or designee will contact the parent/guardian to develop an immediate plan of action.
8. A designated member of the crisis team should determine if the student in crisis is exceptional or 504 and if s/he has an IEP/crisis plan.
9. The principal or the counselor will contact system-level personnel for additional assistance if appropriate. (Director of Student Services, Director of Exceptional Children, Student Assistance Coordinator, Behavior Management Specialist, and a superintendent)
10. The classroom teacher or a designee will work with the remaining students in the classroom as appropriate.
11. The counselor or principal will guide the parent toward available mental health resources.
12. Document the incidents, times/places, contacts made and steps taken. Be specific.
13. Maintain confidentiality of appropriate information.

14. In the event the student is not offered outside help by the parent/guardian, a Department of Social Services neglect referral may be in order.
15. The counselor and principal will determine the type of follow-up needed with students in affected classroom(s) and how it is to be implemented.

After an incident has taken place, it is important for future improvement to assess how the team handled the incident.

Sudden Death of a Student

1. Information related to a student death should be relayed to the school counselor or principal.
2. The counselor or principal should verify the accuracy of the information received and protect family privacy.
3. The principal or designee will notify the central office.
4. The superintendent will determine how to address the media.
5. System-level personnel can provide direction for the school crisis team to determine a plan of action pertinent to the situation. A plan may include such things as:
 - dissemination of information to the staff, students, and parents
 - identification of students who may need special attention and strategies for follow-up
 - structure for the school day so that necessary support can be provided
 - available resources
 - specifics on how funeral arrangements and memorials will be handled
5. The school crisis team will develop a plan for appropriate follow-up.

Superintendent: _____

Program Director: _____

Effective: January 1999