

## **Oakland School for Arts Suicide Prevention Policy**

The Governing Board of Oakland School for the Arts recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that an even greater amount of youth consider (17% of high school students) and attempt suicide (over 8% of high school students) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

The possibility of suicide and suicidal ideation requires vigilant attention from our school staff. As a result, we are ethically and legally responsible for providing an appropriate and timely response in preventing suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths. We acknowledge the school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which works to create a safe and nurturing culture that minimizes suicidal ideation in students.

Recognizing that it is the duty of Oakland School for the Arts to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students to the best of its ability, this policy aims to safeguard students and staff against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate support for students, staff, and families affected by suicide attempts and loss. As it is known that the physical, behavioral and emotional health of students greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other practices that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of students.

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Oakland School for the Art's suicide prevention team (made up of the school social worker, school psychologist, an MFT and an MFTA) shall develop strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. These strategies include professional development for all school personnel in all job categories who regularly interact with students or are in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, including substitute teachers, volunteers, expanded learning staff and any other individuals in regular contact with students. Our school psychologist, Dr. Erica Wandner, will attend Suicide Prevention training this fall and will share this important information in our weekly Staff Professional Development.

Oakland School for the Arts suicide prevention team shall develop and implement preventive strategies and intervention procedures that include the following:

### **Prevention:**

1. Implementation: The school has designated a suicide prevention team, led by the school psychologist, who will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy for the school district. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the school suicide prevention coordinator.
2. Staff Professional Development All Staff will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention will be offered to school employed mental health professionals.
3. Youth Suicide Prevention Programming Developmentally-appropriate, student-centered education materials will be integrated into the curriculum of all middle

- and high school health classes. All student IDs shall be printed with the phone number of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline effective the 2019-20 year.
4. Publication and Distribution This policy will be distributed annually, once approved by the Board, and will be included in student and teacher handbooks and on the school website.

#### **Intervention Assessment and Referral:**

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, the student will be seen by a school employed mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If no mental health professional is available, a school administrator will fill this role.

For youth at risk:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety.
2. The principal and school suicide prevention team coordinator will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonable possible
3. Someone from the school administration or mental health team will contact the student's parent or guardian and will assist the family with urgent referral. When appropriate, this may include calling emergency services or bringing the student to the local emergency department, but in most cases, will involve setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider.
4. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate

#### **Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis**

It is crucial that careful steps are taken to help provide the mental health support for the student and to monitor their actions for any signs of suicide. OSA has implemented a detailed action plan for use by staff after a crisis has happened.

#### **Re-Entry to School after a Mental Health Crisis**

Having a streamlined and well planned re-entry process ensures the safety and wellbeing of students. An appropriate re-entry process is an important component of suicide prevention. Involving students in planning for their return to school provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. Detailed re-entry plans have been developed by our Intervention Specialist for staff use.