

HOWARD GARDNER MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE CHARTER SCHOOL

	Students/Families	SF17-1001
	Suicide Awareness Policy	ADOPTED DATE: October 17, 2017 REVIEWED DATE: November 4, 2025 REVISED DATE: November 18, 2025

1. Purpose

The Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School recognizes the importance of maintaining a safe school environment; the impact of students' mental health on their academic performance; and the effect of mental health issues and suicide on students and the entire school community.

This policy provides guidelines for identifying, evaluating, and referring students to the appropriate provider or agency in both crisis and non-crisis situations. The Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School has a strong commitment to awareness and prevention efforts in regard to mental health issues and suicide. This commitment, combined with strategies to increase school connectedness, will serve to improve behavioral health outcomes and reduce suicide.

2. Definition

Suicide Prevention: Actions and strategies aimed at reducing the risk of suicide and promoting mental well-being.

Risk Factors: Conditions or situations that increase the likelihood of a person considering or attempting suicide.

Protective Factors: Positive conditions or supports that reduce the risk of suicide and promote resilience.

Safety Plan: A personalized, written plan that outlines coping strategies and support contacts to help a person stay safe during a mental health crisis.

Suicide: Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicide attempt: A non-fatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.

3. Delegation of Responsibility

The school crisis response team will include School Counselors, the School Social Worker, and the School Psychologist. Community mental health agency resources may be called for assistance.

When there is a concern about suicide risk, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified and are an integral part of the process. If the school suspects that the student's risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, school staff must notify Children and Youth Services.

4. Guidelines for Assisting Students with Suicidal Ideation

When a Student Expresses Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviors

If a student expresses (directly or indirectly) thoughts or behaviors that indicate self-harm:

- Immediately notify a member of the Building Crisis Response Team for assessment.
- If the student is at immediate risk:
 - Do not leave the student alone.
 - Notify the parent/guardian of the situation and connect them with outside resources if needed.
 - Assist the parent/guardian in making a referral to a mental health service provider if an immediate evaluation is necessary.
 - If the parent/guardian refuses to come to school, an ambulance may be called at the parent's expense.
- Document all parent contact immediately using the Parent Acknowledgement Form for Students at Risk of Suicide.
 - Students aged 14 and older should also sign this form.
- Request information from the parent about the emergency evaluation and any recommendations from mental health professionals prior to the student's return to school.
 - If the parent refuses to share information, document the refusal.
- Use the Student Suicide Risk Documentation Form to record all pertinent information.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
 - Discussion of the case should occur only among personnel directly involved in supporting the student.
 - Broader discussion should be strictly on a "need-to-know" basis—limited to information necessary for staff to work with the student appropriately.

Responding to a Suicide Attempt Occurring at School

- Do not leave the student alone.
- Call 911 immediately.
- Contact the Crisis Response Team.
- Notify the parent/guardian or emergency contact listed in school records.

Facilitating a Student's Return to School

(Conducted by a member of the Crisis Response Team)

- Be familiar with the basic details of the case.
- Develop a safety plan with the student before returning to classes.
- Maintain regular contact with the family.
- Serve as a liaison between the student, family, and teachers (with family permission).
- Monitor the student's progress and well-being.
- If the student is unable to attend school for an extended time, collaborate to support academic completion.
- Closely monitor re-entry, maintaining communication with parents/guardians and mental health providers.

5. Responding to a Suicide Death

(Directed by Administration)

- Verify the death.
- Reach out to and support the family.
- Notify the school crisis team.
- Coordinate with external mental health professionals.
- Stay aware of information and misinformation circulating on social media.
- Notify all staff and provide guidance for discussing the event with students.
- Offer support to staff.
- Identify, monitor, and support students who may be at risk.
- Set up crisis support stations at school.
- Assist in or advise on appropriate tributes and memorials.

- All press/media contact will be managed by Administration or a designated representative.

6. Staff Education and Training

- Provide ongoing education on suicide prevention and recognition of risk factors.
- Train staff in strategies that enhance protective factors, resilience, and school connectedness.
- Designate and train select staff to assess and refer students at risk to appropriate services.

7. Parent Education

- Provide education about behavioral health promotion and suicide risk awareness.
- Integrate mental health and suicide prevention information into existing school-family programs.
- Support and guide parents who may experience complex emotions during a crisis.

8. Student Education

- Provide age-appropriate information about suicide prevention.
- Promote positive attitudes and strengthen school connectedness.
- Help students recognize when they or their peers may be at risk.
- Encourage students to seek help for themselves or others.
- Address underlying issues that contribute to suicide risk (e.g., depression, anger, substance use).

