



SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

Policy 3191

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The Governing Board of Audeo Charter School II, Audeo Charter School III, Audeo Valley Charter School, Grossmont Secondary School, and Sweetwater Secondary School (“Charter School”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Governing Board has developed prevention strategies and intervention procedures.

The policy shall be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, the county mental health plan and suicide prevention experts and shall, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and post-vention.

To ensure the policies regarding suicide are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, The Charter School shall appoint an individual (or team) to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact. The suicide prevention point of contact for Charter School and the Executive Director shall ensure proper coordination and consultation with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary.

Charter School shall ensure that measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 are age-appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students.

Prevention and Instruction

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students’ feelings of connectedness with the Charter School and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

The Charter School's instructional and student support program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience.

The Executive Director or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, the Charter School's suicide prevention efforts, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis. California Department of Education youth suicide prevention information can be found at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/suicideprevres.asp>

[This Suicide Prevention Policy shall be easily accessible and prominently displayed on the Charter School Webpage.](#)

The Charter School's instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed, taking into consideration the grade level and age of the students. If offered or included in the Charter School's instructional curriculum, suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide.
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills.
3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.
4. Identify trusted adults, school resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, gender identity, or other support services.

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training for staff may be designed to help staff identify and find help for students at risk of suicide. Materials approved by the Charter School for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, at school facilities and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. The training may be offered under the discretion of the Executive Director and/or Governing Board and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance abuse problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors.

2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior.
3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health.
4. School and community resources and services for students and families in crisis and ways to access them.
5. Charter School procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.

Intervention and Emergency Procedures

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director or designee shall then notify the student's parent/guardian as soon as possible and may also refer the student to mental health resources at the Charter School or in the community.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Executive Director or designee shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
 - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
 - b. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
 - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
2. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, for example the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, Executive Director, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.
3. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.
4. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed, and coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary
5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at the school.

6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on the Charter School campus, the Executive Director or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the Charter School's safety plan. After consultation with the Executive Director or designee and the student's parent/guardian about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Executive Director or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. Charter School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Students shall be encouraged through the education program and in school activities to notify a teacher, Executive Director, another school administrator, psychologist, school counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Employees of the Charter School must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting. In addition, treatment of the mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide.

Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on the school community, including students and staff. Charter School shall follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide death, which incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

1. The Executive Director shall:
 - a) Confirm death and cause.
 - b) Identify a staff member to contact deceased's family (within 24 hours).
 - c) Enact the Suicide Postvention Response.
 - d) Notify all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).
2. Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:
 - a) Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death.
 - b) Emotional support and resources available to staff.

c) Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services (if this is the protocol that is decided by administration). Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.

3. Prepare staff to respond to needs of students regarding the following:

- a) Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment.
- b) Talking points for staff to notify students.
- c) Resources available to students (on and off campus).

4. Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior.

5. Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior.

6. Communicate with the larger school community about the suicide death.

7. Consider funeral arrangements for family and school community.

8. Respond to memorial requests in respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered.

9. Include long-term suicide postvention responses:

- a) Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant event) and how these will be addressed.
- b) Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased.
- c) Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide.

Student Identification Cards

Charter School will include the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) and the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) on all student identification cards. Charter School will also include the number for the Crisis Text Line, which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741 and a local suicide prevention hotline on all student identification cards.