

Policies

Westerly Public Schools Suicide Prevention and Training Policy

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Purpose

Westerly Public Schools, in accordance with Rhode Island General Law § 16-21.7, are committed to protecting the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene, and respond to suicide. Westerly Public Schools in alignment with the Nathan Bruno and Jason Flatt Act will ensure students and staff are trained in suicide awareness and prevention annually. The policy recognizes:

- Physical and mental health as integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and throughout the lifespan;
- Suicide as a leading cause of death among young people locally, nationally, and globally;
- School's role in providing an environment that is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and helps to foster positive youth development and resilience;
- Comprehensive suicide prevention policies include prevention, intervention, and postvention components;
- Alignment with other policies, programs and practices that support the overall social, emotional, and behavioral health of students.

Curricula and Training

Students

Per the statute, suicide prevention curricula for grades 6-12 and staff professional development will be selected from the RIDE approved list.

- How to identify appropriate mental health services both within the school and the larger community;
- When and how to refer students and their families to those services.

Staff

All Westerly Public Schools staff will receive training annually on suicide prevention. Staff approved training materials and instruction shall include training on how to identify appropriate mental health services both within the school and the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. These materials and instruction are to be given by qualified suicide prevention instructors as determined by Westerly Public Schools.

Suicide Intervention

This work will be aligned to the School Safety Plans, School Emergency Response Plans and School Crisis Response Plans, along with like efforts as appropriate.

When a student demonstrates at-risk behavior or discloses at-risk ideation, Westerly Public Schools qualified staff members will follow the risk assessment guidelines.

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In every case, parents must be notified to ensure that the youth receive the necessary care. Westerly Public Schools require a re-entry letter from a student's mental health provider prior to a student's return to school. This may be determined on a case-by-case basis given the details of each situation. The school's role of "in loco parentis" requires that the health and safety of each youth is given consideration.

Suicide Postvention

Postvention is an organized response in the aftermath of a death by suicide. Following an untimely death, Westerly Public Schools will follow the postvention guidelines and procedures.

Adopted: 09/21/2022