

# LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY

## POLICY - SUICIDE RESPONSE

Date Approved by  
School Committee:

1/23/90

Signature of Chair:

On File

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### I. BACKGROUND

The Lexington Public School system recognizes its responsibility to respond to help students and staff deal with the suicide of a student. The suicide of a student has an impact on the whole school community, and it has been noted that one suicide seems in some cases to lead to other suicides.

### II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is the policy of the Lexington schools, first and foremost, to work to prevent suicide.

Education will be provided through the Life Skills Program.

Staff will be provided with information on the signs of depression and suicidal tendencies.

Resources and referrals for students identified as needing help will be available.

### III. APPLICATION

Any threats of suicide made by a student will be reported immediately to the student's counselor.

In the event of a student suicide, it is the policy of the Lexington schools to act quickly to help students and staff and to be sensitive and responsive to the needs and privacy of the student's family.

The principal will contact the family to make sure information is accurate and to get the family's permission to give information to staff and students.

Depending on the time of day the principal learns of the suicide, s/he will try to call a meeting of all staff before the school day starts to provide information on the incident and advise on how to handle students' reactions. If possible, professionals will be available to help staff deal with their own reactions at this meeting as well as prepare them for student reactions.

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If it is not possible to call a faculty meeting, the information will be delivered in writing to all classrooms at the same time so teachers can make announcements to each class. Teachers will restrict their answers to

questions where and when students can talk to counselors about the suicide. This announcement should also remind teachers and students that they do not need to respond to inquiries from the press or others, and that such requests for information may be referred to the principal.

There should be no announcement over the P.A. until all classes have been informed. A follow-up announcement may be made by the principal who may choose to ask the school to observe a moment of silence.

A counselor will visit every classroom that the student was in and will, with the teacher, help students with questions and feelings.

Counselors will be available to help individually or in groups. Students and staff who are most likely to be affected by the suicide should be identified by the principal and counselors and monitored for possible referral. Teachers should release and student who expresses a need to talk with a counselor and should make sure the student actually goes to counseling. The need for counseling may go on for weeks and will be made available for as long as needed.

Attendance at funerals is the decision of the parents. The principal will announce the arrangements to the school as soon as possible.

All media requests should be referred to the principal who will consult with the Superintendent and the family before issuing formal statements.

A letter will be sent to all parents informing them of the suicide and the school's response. Included in this letter will be a list of warning signs of suicide and a list of resources available to families.

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