



Suicide Prevention Policy (Updated September 2023)

This Suicide Prevention Policy meets the requirements of 14 Del. C. §4165, relative to Suicide Awareness and Prevention.

Purpose: First State Montessori Academy (FSMA) recognizes the serious problem of youth suicide and acknowledges that providing this policy regarding youth suicide awareness and prevention is very important. FSMA also acknowledges that youth suicide is a complex issue which cannot be addressed by the school alone. The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and wellbeing of FSMA students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide.

Scope: This policy covers actions that take place in the school, on school property, and at school sanctioned or supervised activities, including, for example, on school grounds, on school buses, at bus stops, at functions held on school grounds, at extra-curricular activities held on and off school grounds, at school sponsored out-of-school events where school staff are present, and at functions held at the school in the evening. This policy applies to the entire school community, including school staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers. This policy will also cover appropriate school responses to suicidal or high risk behaviors that take place outside of the school environment.

Prevention:

Policy Implementation. A committee has been established that is responsible for coordinating the suicide prevention program within the school. This committee oversees issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. Staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the Head of School or other designated staff members, as identified by the committee.

Staff Professional Development. All staff will receive annual professional development provided by The Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families, and the Department of Education. Professional development includes training in recognizing risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. Additional training on FSMA policy and procedures is provided to staff annually. FSMA mental health professionals (School Psychologist and School Counselor) have received specialized training in risk assessment and crisis intervention.

Youth Suicide Prevention Programming: First State Montessori Academy recognizes that school is an important setting for supporting mental health and suicide prevention among youth. Each year, members of our School Counseling Team will develop a plan for sharing about these topics with students based on current information and resources.

Publication and Distribution:

This policy will be included in family and employee handbooks and on the school website.

Confidentiality:

Information regarding mental health and suicide assessment and treatment is considered confidential. This information is only shared with FSMA employees when necessary for purposes of student safety and/or coordination of educational services. Documentation of suicide referral and assessment will remain confidential and is not a part of a student's permanent educational record. When FSMA staff or students make a report of suicide warning signs, the report will remain confidential. Retaliation against an employee, school volunteer, or student for reporting warning signs of suicide is prohibited.

Resources:

Delaware Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health 24-hour Mobile Response and Stabilization Services call center (Mobile Crisis): **1-800-969-HELP (4357)**

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **Call or Text 988**

Rockford Center (Behavioral Health Hospital)
100 Rockford Drive
Newark, DE 19713
(302) 996-5480

Delaware Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families Intake: 1-800-722-7710
www.kids.delaware.gov

School Procedures

ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

When a staff person identifies that a student is exhibiting any potential warning signs of suicide (e.g., making a direct or indirect suicidal threat verbally or in writing to staff or peers, researching death or suicide online, engaging in self-harm) the staff person will notify the Head of School immediately.

When a referral is made:

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure the student's safety.
2. The Head of School will notify other members of the Suicide Assessment Team and ensure that the student is seen by a FSMA mental health professional (School Psychologist or School Counselor) as soon as reasonably possible to assess risk and facilitate referral when appropriate.
3. After the mental health professional meets with the student, the Suicide Assessment Team members will discuss the referral and make recommendations for intervention and follow-up. Team recommendations may include, but are not limited to, referral to outpatient mental health services, referral for risk assessment at a psychiatric facility, calling emergency services, or a referral to the Delaware Department of Prevention and Behavioral Health (DPBH) Mobile Crisis Response.
4. Any time a referral for risk assessment is made, regardless of determined level of risk, the FSMA mental health professional or Head of School will contact the student's parent or guardian.
5. The mental health professional or Head of School will assist the family with any recommended referral to outside agencies or providers.
6. Staff will obtain from the student's parent or guardian written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate.

RE-ENTRY PROCEDURE

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), a school employed mental health professional and/or Head of School will collaborate with the family to coordinate the student's return to school.

1. A school employed mental health professional will communicate and collaborate with the student, their family, and any outside mental health care providers.
2. The family will provide documentation from a mental health care provider. Documentation may include treatment summary, diagnosis, medication information, recommendations for school, and/or that the student has undergone examination and that they are no longer a danger to themselves or others.
3. The designated staff person will periodically check in with student to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing concerns.