



BOARD POLICY ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Board of Directors of John Adams Academies, Inc. recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. This plan and policy aims to safeguard scholars at all John Adams Academy campuses against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for Academy families affected by suicide attempts and loss. As the emotional wellness of scholars greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of scholars. The Superintendent or Designee shall ensure the development of suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention measures and strategies aligned with the principles contained in this policy.

In developing and/or reviewing measures and strategies for use by the Academy, the Superintendent or designee may consult with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, the SELPA, other staff, parents/guardians, scholars, suicide prevention experts, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

Such measures and strategies shall include, but are not limited to:

Suicide Prevention Education & Training

The Academy shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of scholars including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-esteem. Suicide prevention instruction may be incorporated into the health education curriculum where appropriate. Such instruction should be designed to help scholars analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

The Academy shall provide staff with access to training on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, suicide prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention. Any such professional development also shall include additional information regarding groups of scholars judged by the Academy to be at elevated risk for suicide. These groups include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Youth bereaved by suicide;
- Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse disorders;

- Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care; and
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth;

Employee Reporting and Support

Referral to Principal: Whenever an Academy staff member suspects or has knowledge of a scholar's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the appropriate Principal. The Principal or designee, if appropriate and in the best interest of the scholar, shall notify the scholar's parents/guardians/caregivers as soon as possible. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow an initial assessment by the Principal or his/her designee to ensure that the scholar is not endangered by parental notification.

Supporting Scholars Who Have Attempted Suicide: If a suicide attempt by a scholar is made, it is crucial that the Academy protects the privacy of the scholar and maintain a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the scholar. The Principal or his/her designee should contact the parents/guardians/caregivers to offer support.

Re-Entry: A scholar who threatened or attempted suicide is at a higher risk for suicide in the months following the crisis. An appropriate re-entry process is an important component of suicide prevention and intervention. Involving scholars in planning for their return to their course of study provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. The Principal or his/her designee should take steps to support the scholar upon re-entry, which may include:

- Discussing with the family about any specific requests they may have to support the scholar restarting his/her course of study;
- Informing staff about possible days of absences; and
- Allowing for reasonable accommodations for scholars to make up work (e.g., extended deadlines on assignments).

Postvention: Postvention is an intervention conducted after a suicide. A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a scholar or staff member) can have devastating consequences. The Superintendent or designee shall coordinate the response to such an event, which shall include:

Where appropriate, notifying all staff members;

- Where appropriate, notify scholars about suicide death and the availability of any support services;

- Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. The Superintendent shall ensure appropriate communications are used in the event a suicide occurs or an attempt is made by a scholar.
- Identify scholars significantly affected by suicide death and prepare staff to respond to the needs of these and other scholars; and
- Respond to memorial requests in respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other scholars should be considered.

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Charter School employees must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. This policy does not authorize or encourage any Academy employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

Scholar Reporting

Scholars are encouraged to notify a teacher, principal, or any other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another scholar's suicidal intentions.

Additional Resources

Charter School staff and families are encouraged to review the following resources:

- Parents as Partners: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents is a booklet that contains useful information for parents/guardians/caregivers who are concerned that their children may be at risk for suicide. It is available from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE). See the SAVE Web page at <https://www.save.org/>
- Help & Hope for Survivors of Suicide Loss is a guide to help those during the bereavement process and who were greatly affected by the death of a suicide. See the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at <https://sprc.org/>
- For additional information on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, see the Mental Health Recovery Services Model Protocol Web page at http://www.mhrsonline.org/resources/suicide%5Cattempted_suicide_resources_for_schools-9
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis or their friends and loved ones. Call 988. Callers are routed to the closest possible crisis center in their area. <https://988lifeline.org/>