

Suicide Prevention Policy
MicroSociety Academy Charter School
Approved 10/10/19

The MicroSociety Academy Charter School (MACS) Board of Trustees believe in the importance of prioritizing mental health and wellness in our school. MACS is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming school environment where MACS staff and students treat each other with kindness and respect. MACS staff shall seek to create an open, trusting relationships with students, and to encourage students to discuss with a staff member any concerns or issues they may face at school or at home. MACS staff are instructed to be aware of mental health issues facing students and to undertake the training set forth in this policy.

Prevention

The MACS school administration will ensure that school faculty and staff, including contracted personnel and designated school volunteers, receive at least 2 hours of proper training in suicide prevention awareness, but not limited to, youth suicide risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, post-intervention, and resources available within the school and community.

MACS believes in educating students in the importance of safe and healthy choices and coping strategies, recognizing risk factors and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide in oneself and others, and providing help-seeking strategies for oneself or others, including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help. The guidance counselor and/or school nurse will offer age appropriate lessons to students on a yearly basis on such topics.

Information and resources for parents/guardians/caregivers/staff/students:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Web site at <http://www.afsp.org/>
- National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH) at Web site <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>
- Each Mind Matters Web site at <http://www.eachmindmatters.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Crisis Line Web page at <http://www.didihirsch.org/spc>
- Know the Signs Web site at <http://www.suicideispreventable.org/>

Information for Parents/guardians/caregivers

- 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/product/parents-as-partners/>

Action Plan for In-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt is made during the school day on campus, it is important to remember that the health and safety of the student and those around him/her is critical. MACS faculty and staff are directed to:

- Remain calm, remember the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed;
- Move all other students out of the immediate area;
- Immediately contact an administrator. If they are not available, contact the nurse or guidance counselor;
- Call 911 and give them as much information about any suicide note, medications taken, and access to weapons, if applicable;
- If needed, provide medical first aid until a medical professional is available;
- Parents/guardians/caregivers should be contacted as soon as possible;
- Do not send the student away or leave them alone, even if they need to go to the restroom;
- Listen and prompt the student to talk;
- Review options and resources of people who can help;
- Be comfortable with moments of silence as you and the student will need time to process the situation;
- Provide comfort to the student;
- Promise privacy and help, and be respectful, but do not promise confidentiality;
- Student should only be released to parents/guardians/caregivers or to a person who is qualified and trained to provide help.

Action Plan for Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt by a student is outside of MicroSociety Academy Charter School property, it is crucial that the school protects the privacy of the student and maintains a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the student.

- Contact the parents/guardians/caregivers and offer support to the family;
- Discuss with the family how they would like the school to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students;
- Obtain permission from the parents/guardians/caregivers to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis is correct;
- Designate a staff member to handle media requests;
- Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students;
- Offer to the student and parents/guardians/caregivers steps for reintegration to school.

Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis

It is crucial that careful steps are taken to help provide the mental health support for the student and to monitor their actions for any signs of suicide. The following steps should be implemented after the crisis has happened:

- Treat every threat with seriousness and approach with a calm manner; make the student a priority;
- Listen actively and non-judgmentally to the student. Let the student express his or her feelings;
- Acknowledge the students feelings and do not argue with the student;
- Offer hope and let the student know they are safe and that help is provided. Do not promise confidentiality or cause stress;
- Explain calmly and get the student to a trained professional, guidance counselor, or designated staff to further support the student;

- Keep close contact with the parents/guardians/caregivers and mental health professionals working with the student.

Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt

To ensure the safety and reduce the risk of another suicide attempt, the MicroSociety Academy Charter School will utilize the following re-entry process. MACS believes in involving students in planning for their return to school to provide them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. The following steps shall be implemented upon re-entry:

- Obtain a written release of information signed by parents/guardians/caregivers and providers;
- Confer with student and parents/guardians/caregivers about any specific requests on how to handle the situation;
- Inform the student's teachers about possible days of absences;
- Allow accommodations for students to make up work (be understanding that missed assignments may add stress to student);
- Mental health professionals or trusted staff members should maintain ongoing contact to monitor student's actions and mood;
- Work with parents/guardians/caregivers to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

Resource for Re-Entry:

- The School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide or Made Serious Suicidal Threats is a guide that will assist in school re-entry for students after an attempted suicide. See the Mental Health Recovery Services Resource Web page at http://www.mhrsonline.org/resources/suicide%5Cattempted_suicide_resources_for_schools-9/