

Procedure for Dealing with a Student in Mental Health Crisis

Definition of Mental Health Crisis:

According to the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), a mental health crisis refers to a situation in which an individual's behavior poses an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others due to a mental health condition. This may include severe depression, thoughts of suicide, psychotic episodes, severe anxiety attacks, or other acute manifestations of mental illness.

Staff Response in a Crisis:

1. **Immediate Reporting:** Any staff member who notices signs of a mental health crisis in a student should immediately report to the school nurse, social worker, or designated medication certified staff. Under no circumstances is a student in crisis to be left alone.
2. **Assessment by School Personnel:** Upon receiving the report, the school nurse, social worker, or designated medication certified staff will conduct a quick but thorough assessment of the situation to determine the level of risk and the appropriate response.
3. **Contact Netcare Access (For Students 18 and above):** If the student is 18 years or older and in crisis, the school nurse, medication certified staff, or social worker will contact Netcare Access Crisis Line at 614-276-CARE (2273) for assistance. Relevant information about the student's condition and location will be provided. Netcare's mobile crisis team will be dispatched to assess the student on-site.
4. **Contact Nationwide Children's Crisis Line (For Minors):** If the student is a minor (below 18 years old) and in crisis, the school nurse, medication certified staff, or social worker will contact the Nationwide Children's Crisis Line at (614) 722-1800 to navigate the situation. Their trained professionals will provide guidance and assistance in managing the crisis effectively.
5. **Addressing Active Suicide Attempt or Ideation:** If a student is actively attempting suicide or expressing clear suicidal ideation, regardless of age, the nurse or designated staff member will immediately call 911 for emergency assistance. Essential details about the student's condition, location, and any immediate threats to their safety will be provided.
6. **Notify Parent/Guardian:** Inform the student's parent or guardian about the situation promptly. Provide them with essential details about the student's condition and the steps being taken to address the crisis.

Staff Response Following a Crisis:

1. **Follow-Up:** Find out if arrangements have been made for long-term clinical and/or support services. If neither short-term procedures nor long-term services were properly conducted or pursued, consult with the Principal to determine appropriate action.
2. **Create a Return-to-School Plan:** Discuss with the appropriate parties (parents, school staff, outside counselor, etc.) the plan for the student to return to school and develop a transition plan to address necessary accommodations and maintain continuing contact with the student, parents and building staff.

3. **Develop a Student Safety Plan:** Collaborate with the student, their family and other support providers in the development of a student safety plan, as needed, to help keep the student safe while s/he is at school.

Training Provided to Staff:

1. **Mental Health First Aid:** All staff members will receive training in mental health first aid, including recognizing the signs of mental illness, responding to crises, and providing initial support and assistance.
2. **Crisis Intervention Training:** Designated staff members will receive specialized training in crisis intervention techniques, such as de-escalation strategies and emergency response protocols.
3. **Trauma-Informed Care:** Staff will be trained in trauma-informed care principles to approach students in crisis with empathy, understanding, and sensitivity.
4. **Regular Updates and Refreshers:** Staff training will be regularly updated to ensure all personnel are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills necessary to respond effectively to mental health crises.

Parental Consent: At the beginning of each school year, parents or guardians of enrolled students will be required to sign an emergency medical authorization form, as per Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.712. This form will grant the school permission to seek appropriate medical and mental health treatment for the student in the event of a crisis, including contacting emergency services and involving external healthcare providers as necessary.