



Suicide Prevention Policy

The Board of Directors of Orange County Academy of Sciences and Arts (hereinafter, “Charter School”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. This policy aims to safeguard students against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for Charter School families affected by suicide attempts and loss. As the emotional wellness of students greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of students.

This policy was developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, [county mental health plan](#), school-employed or contracted mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. The Charter School’s governing board will review and update this policy periodically as need, but no less than every five years.

Suicide Prevention Education & Training:

The Charter School shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students 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 students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

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

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

Re-Entry: A student 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 students in planning for their return provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment. The Executive Director or his/her designee should take steps to support the student upon re-entry, which may include:

- Discussing with the family about any specific requests they may have to support the student restarting their course of study;
- Informing staff about possible days of absences; and
- Allowing for reasonable accommodations for students 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 student or staff member) can have devastating consequences. The Executive Director or designee shall coordinate the response to such an event, which shall include:

- Where appropriate, notifying all staff members;
- Where appropriate, notify students about suicide death and the availability of any support services;
 - Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. The Executive Director shall ensure appropriate communications are used in the event a suicide occurs or an attempt is made by a student.
- Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and prepare staff to respond to the needs of these and other students; and

- Respond to memorial requests in respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handed in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students 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 a Charter School employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

Student Reporting:

Students 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 student'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/product/parents-as-partners/>
- 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 <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/help-hope-survivors-suicide-loss>
- 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 1.800.273.8255 (TALK). Callers are routed to the closest possible crisis center in their area. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.