

V. Students

A. Administrative Policies

6. Student Health & Wellness

g. Nathan Bruno Suicide Prevention Policy

Introduction:

In the spring of 2021, the RI General Assembly passed the [Nathan Bruno/Jason Flatt Act \(16-21.7\)](#) that serves as the enabling legislation for this model policy guidance.

Requirements of the act include:

- Adoption of Rules and Regulations supporting suicide awareness and prevention training each year for public school personnel and students;
- Prepare a list of approved [suicide prevention training materials](#); and,
- Develop and adopt a model policy on student suicide prevention to address procedures related to prevention, intervention and postvention.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene, and respond to suicide. The policy recognizes:

- Physical and mental health as integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and throughout the lifespan;
- Suicide as a leading cause of death among young people locally, nationally, and globally;
- School's role in providing an environment that is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and helps to foster positive youth development and resilience;
- Comprehensive suicide prevention policies include prevention, intervention, and postvention components; and
- Alignment with other policies, programs and practices that support the overall social, emotional and behavioral health of students ([American Foundation For Suicide Prevention](#), 2022).

This policy is based on the [Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary and Resources](#) published by the [American Foundation For Suicide Prevention](#) and represents a collaboration of the Foundation, [American School Counselor Association](#), [National Association of School Psychologists](#), and [The Trevor Project](#).

Scope:

This policy covers the entire school community defined as: in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles and at bus stops, and at school-sponsored out-of-school events where school staff are present. This policy also includes school responses to suicidal or high-risk behaviors that take place outside of the school environment.

Suicide Prevention

Per The Nathan Bruno Act, suicide prevention curricula for grades 6-12 and staff professional development will be selected from the [RIDE approved list](#).

The content of the curricula must include:

- How to identify appropriate mental health services both within the school and the larger community; and,
- When and how to refer students and their families to those services. Additional content could include:
- Focusing on safe and healthy choices and coping strategies focused on resilience building;
- Recognizing risk factors and warning signs of mental health conditions and suicide in oneself and others; and,
- Identifying help seeking strategies for oneself and others (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention).

Per the Act, this training is required for all students every year. School leaders and teams are advised to use professional judgement in exempting a child from instruction. If a parent or school staff member feels that a student may be uncomfortable with the training or if a student expresses discomfort related to the training, other support avenues should be pursued.

Staff Professional Development

All public school personnel hired or contracted by the school district, including, but not limited to: teachers, administration, custodians, lunch personnel, substitutes, nurses, coaches and coaching staff, and volunteers will receive a training in suicide prevention every year.

The District may choose from a list of training materials included [here](#).

Approved training materials and instruction must include:

- How to identify appropriate mental health services both within the school and the larger community, and
- When and how to refer youth and their families to those services.

These materials and instruction are to be given by qualified suicide prevention instructors as determined by the entities and groups.

Suicide Intervention

Suicide prevention and intervention will be connected to School Safety Plans and School Emergency Response Plans along with like efforts as appropriate.

Assessment and Referral

Students identified by peers or staff as potentially suicidal shall be seen immediately by members of the school-based mental health team. The school-based mental health professional will assess the risk and facilitate a referral if necessary and appropriate. Kids Link RI™ is a behavioral

health triage service and referral network. It represents a collaboration of Gateway Healthcare, Lifespan, Hasbro Children's Hospital and Bradley Hospital, Kids' Link RI is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help triage children and youth in need of mental health services and refer them to treatment providers. Kids Link RI can also provide after care and support services for students and families

If a student is not in immediate danger, the school team can create a safety plan with the student and connect the student and family to resources. The team can set up a follow-up with the student to check in with progress on accessing the resources and assess how the student is managing.

If the student is in crisis but not in immediate danger, the school principal and parent should be contacted. Then, with parent permission, the school based mental health professional can contact Kids Link RI at 1-855-543-5465 to connect the student and family with support services. Kids Link RI can enroll students in a same day emergency evaluation or a same week crisis evaluation based on need. This can be determined using the Rhode Island Suicide Prevention Screener found in the Rhode Island Suicide Prevention Initiative Handbook.

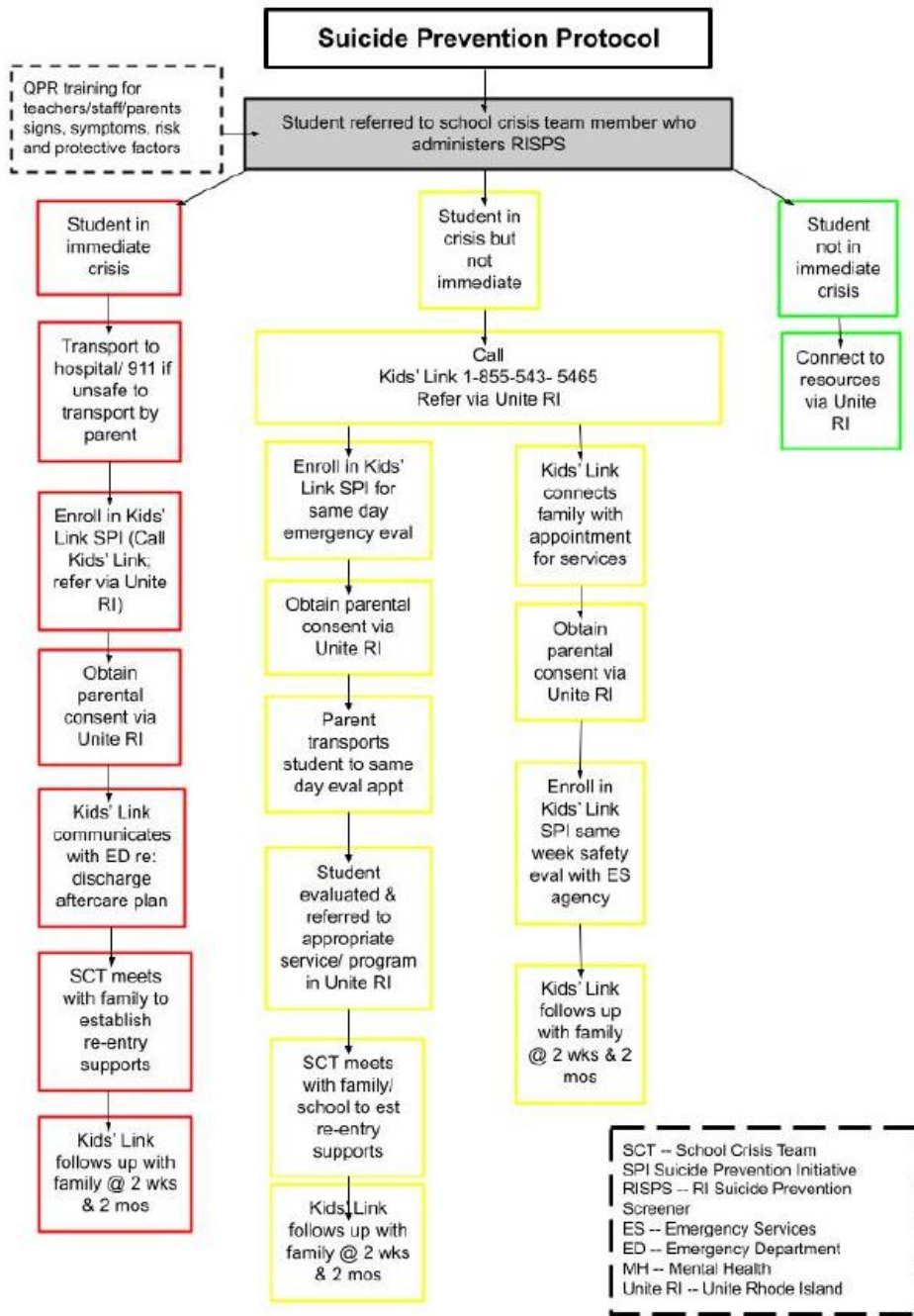
Students who are in immediate danger and crisis should be transported to the hospital immediately. The building administrator and parent need to be contacted. Parents need to consent to enable Kids Link RI to follow-up with the student as well as consent to communicate with the school designee. The school-based team need to meet with the family to establish re-entry supports. Any student in crisis and/or danger should not be left alone.

A referral process should be prominently disseminated to all staff members, so they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and community-based resources. This process should be shared with parents, caregivers and students.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications if a suicide occurs or an attempt is made by a student or adult on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

In every case, parents must be notified to ensure that the youth receive the necessary care. Schools may require a re-entry letter from a student's mental health provider prior to allowing a student to return to school. This may be determined on a case by case basis given the details of each situation.

The below flowchart shall guide the intervention response:



Suicide Postvention

Postvention is an organized response in the aftermath of a suicide to accomplish any one or more of the following:

- To facilitate the healing of individuals from the grief and distress of suicide loss
- To mitigate other negative effects of exposure to suicide
- To prevent suicide among people who are at high risk after exposure to suicide (Survivors of Suicide Taskforce)

Postvention includes counseling or other care given to students after another student's suicide or attempted suicide. It may include counseling to students that have made a suicide attempt or have reported ideation. This counselling shall consist of regular check ins, as determined by a mental health professional. Schools may delineate the roles and responsibilities of people on the school crisis team for postvention.

Legal References:

- Nathan Bruno Jason Flatt Act (RIGL § 16-21.7)
- Rhode Island Safe Schools Act, (RIGL § 16-21-34)
- Threat Assessment Teams and Oversight Committees (RIGL §16-21-23.2)
- Requirements of school safety plans, school emergency response plans, and school crisis response plans (RIGL §16-21-24)
- Basic Education Plan Section G-14-2.1
- Instruction in health and physical education (RIGL 16-22-4)
- Suicide Prevention and Awareness (RIGL §16-22-14)
- Right to a safe school (RIGL §16-2-17)

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