

REGULATION

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: GAD, JB-RA, JH, JN, JN-RA, JS-RA

Responsible Office: CHIEF STUDENT & SYSTEMIC SUPPORTS OFFICER, DIVISION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES, OFFICE OF SCHOOL SECURITY

CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS: REPORTING OF AT-RISK STUDENT BEHAVIORS

A. PURPOSE

To establish procedures regarding reporting at-risk student behaviors such as suicidal threats and gestures, self-injurious behaviors, plans to run away, requests for drug and alcohol counseling, requests for mental health support, and requests for pregnancy support.

B. BACKGROUND

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) recognizes the importance of taking the appropriate measures to protect students from harm. This regulation establishes procedures and the responsibility of staff regarding this charge.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. ***Confidential Communication*** – information revealed during a counseling session or a private conference that the student expresses, either verbally or through other communication cues, a desire to maintain confidence in the communication to other individuals, including other students, parent(s)/guardian(s), teachers, administrators, or law enforcement officers.
2. ***Eligible Student*** – a student who is 18 years of age or older, or a student who is married and, therefore, has the same rights as those granted to the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) as defined in Policy JH – Student Records.
3. ***Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)*** – self-injurious thoughts or behaviors, including physical harm that causes tissue damage such as breaking the skin, bruising, and leaving lasting marks. NSSI involves a student harming themselves without the intent to die.

4. ***Runaway*** – a student who is absent from the student’s home or place of legal residence at least overnight without the permission of the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s).
5. ***Student Request for Drug and Alcohol Counseling*** – a request for counseling and information related to drug or alcohol abuse, including treatment and advice.
6. ***Student Request for Mental Health Support*** – a request for counseling support, including psycho-educational services designed to prevent and support emotional and learning difficulties to ensure student success.
7. ***Student Request for Support Regarding Pregnancy*** – a request for reproductive health services by a student who reports that they are pregnant or who believes they are pregnant.
8. ***Student Services Team Members*** – pupil personnel workers, school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers.
9. ***Suicidal Threats and Gestures*** – statements, including oral, written, and electronic communications, or behaviors that imply possible suicide.
10. ***Volunteer*** – an individual working under staff supervision who contributes service to the school system without remuneration.

D. PROCEDURES

1. Overview

AACPS shall provide periodic training for all school staff regarding mandated procedures for handling at-risk student behaviors in accordance with this regulation.

- a. In accordance with State law and regulation, licensed employees who have direct contact with students on a regular basis shall complete training on or before December 1 each year in the skills required to:
 - i. Understand and respond to youth suicide risk;
 - ii. Identify professional resources to help students in crisis;
 - iii. Recognize student behavioral health issues;
 - iv. Recognize students experiencing trauma or violence out of school and refer students to behavioral health services; and
 - v. Support any students needing services at a community school.

- b. AACPS employees and volunteers shall immediately report to the principal or the principal's designee any discussion with any student that indicates any behavior that is potentially harmful or dangerous to the student, others, or the community, including NSSI, suicidal threats or gestures, or plans to run away, unless an exception applies under this regulation or State law.
- c. AACPS employees who work with students in counseling relationships shall inform students of the limitations regarding confidential communications, and the obligation to disclose certain at-risk student behavior to the principal or the principal's designee.

2. Suicidal Threats and Gestures

- a. An AACPS employee or volunteer who becomes aware of a student who implies, states, writes about, or communicates possible suicide threats or makes suicidal gestures shall immediately report this information to a student services team member and the principal or the principal's designee.
- b. The student shall remain under continuous adult supervision without exception until the risk assessment has been completed.
- c. The student services team member shall meet with the student immediately to assess the lethality of the situation.
- d. The student services team member assessing the situation shall formally consult with another student services team member, either on site or by telephone, to discuss the case prior to determining appropriate next steps.
- e. The student services team member shall promptly notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - i. If the student services team member is unable to contact the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the student services team member shall inform the principal or the principal's designee, who will attempt to make contact.
 - ii. If the principal or the principal's designee is unable to make contact with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the School Resource Officer (SRO) or law enforcement and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance and shall be notified.
 - iii. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) refuses to accept responsibility for the child, the principal or the principal's designee shall contact the SRO or law enforcement and notify the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.

- iv. In the case of an eligible student, an emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student shall be contacted to assist with accessing mental health support. If the emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student cannot be contacted or refuses to assist the student, the principal or the principal's designee shall contact the SRO or law enforcement and notify the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.

- f. If the situation warrants action necessary for the safety of the student, the student services team member shall advise the principal or the principal's designee on the appropriate course of action. This may include:
 - i. Contacting the SRO or law enforcement for an immediate assessment and transport to the hospital;
 - ii. Requesting that the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) or emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student complete a mental health evaluation;
 - iii. Meeting with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss safety and supports for the student; or
 - iv. Identifying other supports and safety plans, as appropriate.

- g. i. In consultation with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) or an eligible student, the student services team member and principal or the principal's designee shall discuss which, if any, teachers may be given information about the incident.
 - ii. The student services team member who has been working with the student shall complete the *Suicide Attempts and Gestures* form located on the AACPS intranet.

- h. When appropriate, the student services team member(s) and the principal or the principal's designee shall plan for the student's return to school by collaboratively developing a student support plan. The plan may include:
 - i. The student reporting to the school counseling office upon the student's return to school;
 - ii. A student services team member meeting with the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss needs for support in school; or
 - iii. A student services team member contacting the parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding follow up mental health services in the community, if appropriate.

- i. If the suicide threat or gesture occurs when the student is not in the presence of staff, including in social media posts, a class assignment, or by a student in the Virtual Academy:
 - i. Staff shall immediately report the situation to the principal or the principal's designee.
 - ii. If staff is unable to contact the principal or the principal's designee, or the situation is imminent, including a direct suicide statement made on social media or class assignment, staff shall immediately contact law enforcement.
 - iii. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the Office of School Security.
 - iv. The principal or the principal's designee shall contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student who expressed the threat or gesture as soon as practicable. In the case of an eligible student, the principal or principal's designee shall contact an emergency contact or other individual indicated by the eligible student.
 - v. If the principal or principal's designee is unable to contact the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) or an emergency contact or other individual indicated by the eligible student, the principal or principal's designee shall contact law enforcement and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.
 - vi. Upon the student's return to school, the principal or the principal's designee shall notify the appropriate student services team members to initiate a risk assessment, if appropriate, and share relevant information.
- j. If the suicide threat or gesture occurs during a school-sponsored field trip:
 - i. The student shall be supervised at all times by staff.
 - ii. The principal or the principal's designee shall be notified.
 - iii. If it is during the school day, staff shall consult with student services team members to determine an appropriate course of action. If it is after the school day, the principal or principal's designee shall notify the appropriate student services team member the next school day.
 - iv. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be contacted immediately, and a plan shall be developed to ensure the student's safety. In the case of an eligible student, an emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student

shall be contacted immediately and a plan developed to ensure the student's safety. The plan may include:

- a) Contacting law enforcement for an immediate assessment and transport to the hospital;
 - b) Requesting that the parent(s)/guardian(s) or emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student come to the field trip site as soon as possible to pick up the student and take the student for a mental health evaluation; or
 - c) Requesting that the parent(s)/guardian(s) or emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student meet the student upon return from the field trip. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) or emergency contact or individual designated by an eligible student cannot be contacted, the principal or principal's designee shall contact law enforcement and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.
- k. The following procedures shall be followed if the suicide threat or gesture occurs at an after-hour's school-sponsored event:
- i. The student shall be supervised at all times by staff.
 - ii. If the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is present, staff shall immediately notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and suggest that the student be taken for an evaluation by a mental health professional. The student may not continue with the activity until the concern has been addressed.
 - iii. The principal or the principal's designee shall be notified.
 - iv. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) is not present but can be reached by telephone, inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the situation and request that the student be picked up. The staff member in charge shall suggest that the student be taken for an evaluation by a mental health professional.
 - v. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) refuses to accept responsibility for the child or cannot be contacted, the staff member in charge shall call law enforcement. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.
 - vi. In the case of an eligible student, an emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student shall be contacted to assist with accessing mental health support. If the emergency contact or individual designated by the eligible student cannot be contacted or refuses to assist the student, the staff member in charge shall contact law enforcement. The principal or the

principal's designee shall notify the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance.

- vii. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the appropriate student services team member at the start of the next school day for follow-up.
- viii. Upon the student's return to school, the principal or the principal's designee shall notify the appropriate student services team members to initiate a risk assessment, if appropriate, and share relevant information with appropriate AACPS employees.
- l. If a student is assessed and determined to be both suicidal intent and non-suicidal self-injury, then both sets of procedures shall be followed, including completing both online reports.

3. Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

- a. Any situation in which a student engages in NSSI, whether self-reported or reported by another individual, shall be assessed for risk by a student services team member.
- b. If the thoughts or behavior are determined to be NSSI, the following steps shall be taken:
 - i. The student shall be seen by a student services team member to gather information.
 - ii. A plan of action shall be developed in consultation with other student services team members and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s). The plan shall include an agreed upon method of communication between the student services team member and the parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - iii. Permission to speak with outside mental health professionals shall be obtained, if appropriate.
 - iv. The student's parents(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified for each instance of self-injurious behavior or NSSI, unless a different procedure for handling such a matter has been established and documented. If the student is not being seen by an outside mental health professional, outside services shall be suggested to the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student.
 - v. The principal or the principal's designee shall be notified.
 - vi. The student services team member shall complete the *Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Reporting* form located on the AACPS intranet.

- c. If the student is assessed and determined to be both suicidal intent and NSSI then both sets of procedures shall be followed, including the completion of both online reports.

4. Runaway

- a. A student services team member and principal or the principal's designee shall meet with the student immediately to discuss the situation and explore alternative solutions.
- b. The principal or the principal's designee shall promptly notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and School Performance and provide any available information about where, when, and with whom the student ran away. If the situation warrants action necessary for the safety of the student, the principal or the principal's designee shall request that the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) come to the school as soon as possible.
- c. The student services team member and principal or the principal's designee shall conduct a conference with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to explore the appropriateness of the student being seen by an outside mental health professional.
- d. If a student communicates directly with a student services team member that the student plans to run away, the information shall be communicated to the principal or the principal's designee and paragraphs (b) and (c) above shall be followed.

5. Student Request for Mental Health Support

- a. If a student requests mental health support, the student shall be referred to the school counseling office.
- b. Student services team members may meet a student on a crisis basis to assess for risk. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified of the risk assessment as soon as possible, unless information results in a referral to the Department of Social Services for potential child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or mental injury committed by the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- c. Parental/guardian notification is not required for an eligible student.

6. Student Request for Drug and Alcohol Counseling

- a. In accordance with State law, a minor has the same capacity as an adult to consent to treatment for or advice about drug abuse and alcoholism. As such, a student request for drug or alcohol counseling shall be a confidential communication and

may not be disclosed to the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) without the student's consent.

- b. Staff receiving a request from a student regarding alcohol or drug abuse counseling shall refer the student to a member of the school-based student services team.

7. Student Request for Support Regarding Pregnancy

- a. In accordance with State law, a minor has the same capacity as an adult to consent to treatment for or advice about reproductive health services. Therefore, student requests regarding pregnancy shall be confidential and may not be disclosed to the student's parent(s)/ guardian(s) without the student's consent.
- b. When a student seeks counseling regarding pregnancy, the goal of the student services team member shall be to encourage the student to involve the student's family.
- c. If the student is persistently resistant to informing the family regarding the pregnancy, the student services team member, working with the student, shall refer the student to the school health professional who shall continue to recommend parent involvement and provide information and referrals regarding prenatal care, or the staff member designated in Regulation JS-RA – Pregnant and Parenting Students who shall connect the student with childcare, early education services, and transportation services to and from school.
- d. Attendance accommodations for the student shall be in accordance with Regulation JB-RA – Compulsory Attendance and Regulation JS-RA – Pregnant and Parenting Students.

Regulation History: Issued 05/16/07; Revised 06/27/11; 07/18/13; 06/20/18; 8/21/19; 06/25/24

Note Previous Regulation History: Replaces Policy 800.04, adopted 09/03/75 and revised 08/04/92

Legal References: Section 20-102 of the Health General Article; Section 6-122 of the Education Article; COMAR 13A.07.11.03