

REGULATION ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Responsible Office: DIVISION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATION: REPORTING OF AT-RISK STUDENT BEHAVIORS

A. PURPOSE

To establish procedures regarding reporting at-risk student behaviors, including suicidal threats and gestures, self-injurious behaviors, runaway, requests for drug and alcohol counseling, requests for mental health support, and requests for pregnancy support.

B. BACKGROUND

The Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) administration 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, other students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, peers, 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 as defined in Policy JH – Student Records.
3. ***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).
4. ***Self-Injurious Behaviors*** – behaviors by a student to the student that deliberately cause physical harm to the extent of causing tissue damage, including breaking the skin, bruising, and leaving lasting marks.

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 she is pregnant or who believes she is pregnant.
8. ***Suicidal Threats and Gestures*** – statements, including oral, written, and electronic communications, or behaviors that imply possible suicide or self-harm.
9. ***Student Services Team Members*** – pupil personnel workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and Anne Arundel County Department of Health school health professionals.
10. ***Volunteer***– an individual who, working under staff supervision, 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, certificated employees who have direct contact with students on a regular basis shall complete training or on or before December 1 each year in the skills required to understand and respond to youth suicide risk and identify professional resources to help students in crisis.
- 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 self, others, or the community, unless an exception applies under this regulation or State law.
- c. AACPS employees and Anne Arundel County Health Department 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) or individual designated by the eligible student, 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) or individual designated by the eligible student, the School Resource Officer (SRO) or law enforcement shall be notified.
- 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 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;
 - iv. Identifying other supports and safety plans, as appropriate;

- v. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) refuses to accept responsibility for the child or cannot be contacted, the principal or the principal's designee shall contact law enforcement and notify the Regional Assistant Superintendent; or
- 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 principal or the principal's designee shall contact law enforcement and notify the Regional Assistant Superintendent.
- g.
 - i. In consultation with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) or an eligible student, the student services team member, 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 online report 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. The 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 social media posts or a class assignment:
 - i. Staff shall 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 contact law enforcement.
 - iii. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the Office of School Safety.

- 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.
- v. 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; and
 - iv. The student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be contacted immediately, and a plan shall be 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 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; and
 - c) Requesting that the parent(s)/guardian(s) or individual designated by the eligible student meet the student upon return from the field trip.
 - v. The principal or the principal’s designee shall notify the appropriate student services team member the next school day to follow up.
- 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 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. The principal or the principal’s designee shall be notified.

- iii. 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. The principal or the principal's designee shall be notified.
- iv. 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 and notify the principal or the principal's designee. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the Regional Assistant Superintendent.
- v. 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 and notify the principal or the principal's designee. The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the Regional Assistant Superintendent.
- vi. 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.
- vii. 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.

3. Self-Injurious Behaviors

- a. Any situation in which a student engages in self-injurious behavior, whether self-reported or reported by another individual, shall be handled as a suicide threat the first time the behavior occurs, unless the student services team member working with the student is convinced without question that this is an incident of self-injury rather than a suicidal gesture.
- b. If the behavior is repetitive self-injurious behavior and does not appear to reflect suicidal threats or gestures, the protocol for handling those behaviors shall be:
 - 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 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, 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 online report located on the AACPS intranet.

4. Runaway

- a. A student services team member, 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). 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, 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.
- e. If a student runs away from the student's legal residence, staff shall notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and provide any available information about where, when, and with whom the student ran away. The principal or the principal's designee shall immediately notify the Regional Assistant Superintendent.

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 consent 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 request that is solely for alcohol and drug abuse 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 Pregnancy Support**
- 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, such a request 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 concerns, the first goal 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 concern, 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.
 - d. Attendance accommodations for the student shall be in accordance with Policy JB – Compulsory Attendance.

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