**PURPOSE**

Bear Creek Community Charter School adopts this policy in acknowledgement of our commitment to maintaining a safe school environment, to protect the safety and welfare of students, and to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth. Mental health issues can have a tremendous effect on academic performance. Therefore, in the effort to promote the safety and welfare of our students, Bear Creek will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources available to prevent suicide and promote a healthy lifestyle.

**AUTHORITY**

This policy shall apply in any situation where a student is expressing suicidal thoughts or intentions of self-harm on school property, at a school sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to or from a school sponsored activity.

**PUBLICATION**

Bear Creek will notify its school personnel, students, and parents/guardians of this policy and will post it on the Bear Creek Guidance Website.

**DEFINITIONS**

**At-Risk:** any student with risk factors that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior

**Crisis Response Team:** a team consisting of, but not limited to, administration, guidance counselor, school nurse, other members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP), and community mental health agency liaisons affiliated with the school.

**Prevention:** the efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide

**Postvention:** a crisis intervention strategy designed to reduce the risk of suicide and suicide contagion, provide support needed, addressing the social stigma associated with suicide, and disseminate factual information following a suicide in the school community

**Protective Factors:** characteristics that reduce the risk and likelihood of the student developing a mental illness or suicidal thoughts and intentions.

**Resilience:** a student’s innate ability to persevere in the face of adversity and reduce the risk of unhealthy outcomes

**Risk Factors:** characteristics [biological, psychological, social, individual, family, environment] or conditions that increase the change that a person may try to take his or her life. Suicide risk tends to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time

**Suicidal Contagion:** process by which suicidal behavior influences an increase in the suicidal behaviors of others

**Suicidal Ideation:** thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior which may result in death

**Warning Signs:** evidence based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide either immediately or in the near future

**AWARENESS AND PREVENTION**

Bear Creek Community Charter School’s crisis response team includes, but is not limited to, administrators, guidance counselor, school nurse, members of the SAP team, and liaisons for mental health providers.

Bear Creek Community Charter School will utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide awareness and prevention

**PREVENTION EDUCATION**

Students shall receive age-appropriate knowledge through health and/or guidance curricula on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self and/or others. Lessons will contain information on emotional, behavioral, and social skills development. Students who are in need of intervention will be referred in accordance with Bear Creek’s referral procedures for screening and recommendations.

Student Education may include:

* Help seeking approaches, promoting a climate that encourages peer referral
* Increasing students’ ability to recognize when a student may need help/intervention
* Addressing problems that can lead to an unhealthy way of thinking

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

All school personnel including, but not limited to, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff shall receive information regarding the school’s protocols for suicide awareness and prevention. Education will be provided for all school personnel about the importance of suicide prevention and recognition of suicide risk factors, as well as strategies to enhance protective factors, resilience, and school connectedness. Additionally, all school personnel will be educated about the warning signs and risk factors for youth depression and suicide. As part of Bear Creek Community Charter School’s Professional Development Plan, professional staff in the school, which serves students in grades 6-8 (mandated grade levels are 6-12, including any other professional staff employed in that building), will participate in four hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every 5 years.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents and guardians play a key role in youth suicide prevention, and it important for the school to involve them in suicide prevention efforts. Parents/guardians need to be informed and actively involved in decisions regarding their child’s welfare. Parents and guardians who learn the warning signs and risk factors for suicide are better equipped to connect their children with professional help when necessary. Parents and guardians should be advised to take every statement seriously and avoid assuming that a child is simply seeking attention. If a parent does not comply with school procedures with respect to a crisis situation (found in handbook), personnel at Bear Creek Community Charter School can contact CYS or emergency personnel to respond to the crisis situation.

**INTERVENTION/PREVENTION**

In compliance with state regulations and in support of the school’s suicide prevention methods, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents/guardians, administration, or other appropriate authority when the welfare of the student or other students is at risk.

School personnel who have identified a student with one or more risk factors, or warning signs, or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention in accordance with Bear Creek’s referral procedures as noted in the handbook.

Bear Creek will create an mental health safety plan to support a student and their family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

For students with disabilities, and students who require special education services, who are identified as being at-risk, the appropriate team will be notified and will address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

School personnel who are made aware of any threat or witness any attempt towards self-harm will immediately notify the counselor or administration. The student should not be left alone nor promised that information will be kept in confidence. In life-threatening situations, confidentiality is waved.

If school personnel is made aware of an expressed suicide thought or intention during an afterschool program, call 1-800-SUICIDE, 1-800-273-TALK, or **(570) 552-6000 NEPA Community Counseling Crisis Intervention Line.**

**RESPONSE**

**The first school personnel on the scene of a suicide or suicide attempt must follow the Bear Creek’s crisis response procedures and will immediately notify the counselor or administration.**

**Bear Creek will immediately notify the parents or guardians of the affected student.**