

 <p><b>Bridges Charter School</b></p>	<p><b>Board Policy: Suicide Prevention</b></p>	
<p><b>Policy Number:</b> <b>5141.5</b></p>	<p><b>Adopted:</b> <b>10/23/17</b></p>	<p><b>Revised:</b> <b>06/13/2022</b></p>

The Board of Directors of Bridges Charter School (“BCS”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Board of Directors has developed prevention strategies and intervention procedures.

The policy has been developed in consultation with BCS and community stakeholders, BCS - employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts and shall, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

**Prevention and Instruction**

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students’ feelings of connectedness with BCS and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

BCS’s instructional and student support program 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 resilience.

The Director or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, BCS’s suicide prevention efforts, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and/or BCS and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

BCS’s instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed, taking into consideration the grade level and age of the students. If offered or included in BCS’s instructional curriculum, suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide.
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills.

3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent.
4. Identify trusted adults, BCS resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth, including those at high risk, such as youth bereaved by suicide; youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, gender identity, or other support services.

### **Staff Development**

Suicide prevention training for staff will be provided and be designed to help staff identify and find help for students at risk of suicide. The training may be offered under the discretion of the Director and/or Board of Directors and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance abuse problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors.
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior.
3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health.
4. BCS and community resources and services for students and families in crisis and ways to access them.
5. BCS procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.
6. Materials approved by BCS for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the BCS site and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.
7. Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review or suitable suicide prevention materials.

## **Intervention and Emergency Procedures**

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the Director or designee. The Director or designee shall then notify the student's parent/guardian as soon as possible and may also refer the student to mental health resources at BCS or in the community.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Director or designee shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
  - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
  - b. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened;
  - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
2. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, for example the BCS counselor, psychologist, nurse, Director, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.
3. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.
4. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed.
5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at BCS.
6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on the BCS campus, the Director or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in BCS safety plan. After consultation with the Director or designee and the student's parent/guardian about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Director or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. BCS staff may receive assistance from BCS

counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Students shall be encouraged through the education program and in BCS activities to notify a teacher, Director, another BCS administrator, psychologist, BCS counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

### **Postvention**

In the event that a student dies by suicide, the Director or designee shall communicate with the student's parents/guardians to offer condolences, assistance, and resources. In accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Director or designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

The Director or designee shall implement procedures to address students' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. He/she shall provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the school-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. The school's response shall not sensationalize suicide and shall focus on the school's postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the Director or designee shall provide an opportunity for all staff who responded to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions

### **BCS Employees Acting Within Scope**

BCS shall ensure that employees act only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging a BCS employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

## Local Resources:

Ventura County Behavioral Health Crisis Tea: 1-866-998-2243

Vista Del Mar: 1-085-653-6434

CIT Administrator: Mark Stadler 805-207-7800

Crisis Intervention Team trained Deputy/Officer:

- Camarillo Police 805-388-5100
- Oxnard Police: 805-385-6950
- Simi Valley Police 805=583-6950
- Ventura Police 805-339-4400
- Thousand Oaks/Oak Park Police 805-494-8200
- Moorpark Police 805=532-2700
- Agoura Police 818-878-1808

## Additional Resources

1. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - A 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in a suicidal crisis or emotional distress
  - \* Call a suicide hotline number
    - 877-727-4747 (24 hours/7 days) Adults - Ventura County Suicide Prevention Center Crisis Line
    - 866-431-2478 (24 hours/7 days) Children and Families' Crisis Line
    - 800-273-TALK (24 hours/7 days) National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  - Trained counselors for free, confidential help
1. Ventura County Wellness Everyday
2. Ventura County 211 - Health and human services referral line
3. High School Suicide Prevention Toolkit (SAMHSA, June 2012)
4. After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools
5. California Department of Education - Youth Suicide Prevention Information - Legislation, publications and additional resources
6. The Trevor Project: A Model School Policy on Suicide Prevention
7. The Trevor Project, a leading national organization, offers a policy model for school districts with recommended language that will address prevention, assessment, intervention and response to youth suicide behavior
8. National Institute of Mental Health - A wealth of resources regarding various mental health issues in the U.S.
9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Additional resources and statistics on youth suicide
10. The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools (CDC)
11. Youth Suicide Warning Signs

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, the director shall appoint an individual (or team) to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for the school. In addition, the school shall identify at least one staff member to serve as the liaison to the school's suicide prevention point of contact, and coordinate and implement suicide prevention activities on campus. This policy shall be reviewed and revised as indicated, at least annually in conjunction with the previously mentioned community stakeholders.

## **Suicide Prevention Point of Contact:**

Cindy McCarthy

1335 Calle Bouganvilla  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360  
805-492-3569  
[cindy.mccarthy@bridgescharter.org](mailto:cindy.mccarthy@bridgescharter.org)

**Liaison(s) to the school's suicide prevention point of contact:**

Michelle Morgan  
School Counselor  
1335 Calle Bouganvilla  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360  
805-492-3569  
[michelle.morgan@bridgescharter.org](mailto:michelle.morgan@bridgescharter.org)

Skye Stifel  
School Psychologist  
1335 Calle Bouganvilla  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360  
805-492-3569  
[skye.stifel@bridgescharter.org](mailto:skye.stifel@bridgescharter.org)