

8468 CRISIS RESPONSE

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to be prepared to confront circumstances in which the physical and/or mental well-being of pupils, staff and other individuals on school grounds is threatened or overtly impacted upon by an individual or group of individuals. Situations at issue include, but are not limited to, acts of terrorism, hostage situations and other threats or acts of a violent nature. In crisis situations, the Board reserves the right to exclude (or remove) any individual who has been determined to pose an imminent or potential threat to student or staff safety. The Board further recognizes there is a need to deal with the aftermath of such events and circumstances, and to contend with the psychological trauma, pain and confusion, which may ensue as the result of these events.

CRISIS TEAM

The Board establishes through the person of the Superintendent or his/her designee, a Crisis Team whose responsibility it shall be to act:

1. As a source of information;
2. As a vehicle through which direct services may be delivered;
3. In an advisory capacity to the Superintendent, or his/her designee, and/or other agents or agencies dealing with the crisis situation.

The Crisis Team shall consist of the following membership:

1. The Superintendent of Schools, or his/her designee;
2. An administrator from each of the schools within the district;
3. School Psychologist(s);
4. Guidance Counselor(s);
5. School Social Worker(s);
6. Director of Special Services and/or Guidance;
7. Director of Buildings and Grounds;



8. Teacher representative(s);
9. A representative of local/State Police;
10. A representative of local medical facility/hospital;
11. School Nurse;
12. School Safety Specialist;
13. Others as deemed appropriate to the function of the Crisis Team; e.g., a fire department representative, EMT specialist, other school or community representatives.

The Crisis Team shall be convened at least on an annual basis:

1. To review established policy and procedures;
2. To orient new members as to their responsibilities;
3. To maintain and reinforce lines of communication between the various disciplines and specialists who make up the Crisis Team.

SCHOOL CLEARANCE FOLLOWING STUDENT CRISIS SITUATION

The Board of Education is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of students during the school day, and will take action as necessary to provide for the safety and security of its students, staff and/or property. In "student crisis situations," the Board reserves the right to exclude (or remove) a student who has been determined to pose an imminent or potential threat to student or staff safety, pending appropriate mental health clearance.

- D) Examples of "Student Crisis Situations" (non-exhaustive)
- A) Student exhibits actions creating an imminent danger to the student or others, e.g., suicidal or homicidal ideation(s) or attempt(s);
 - B) Student engages in verbalization(s) or other action(s) threatening the health, safety or well-being of himself/herself, other students, or staff;



- C) **Student** engages in verbalization(s) or other action(s) reflecting an intent or plan to harm himself/herself, other students, or staff;
- D) Student engages in verbalization(s) or other action(s) indicating that the student may be at risk of causing harm to himself/herself, other students, or staff;
- E) Student engages in verbalization(s) or other action(s) indicating that the student poses a threat to the health, safety or well-being of himself/herself, other students, or staff;
- F) Student possesses object(s) or material(s) posing a threat to the health, safety or well-being of himself/herself, other students, or staff; or
- G) Student engages in any other action determined to be a potentially threatening or harmful activity.

II) Intersection with Student Discipline

- A) A student's exclusion (or removal) based upon a student crisis situation shall not be considered a disciplinary consequence.
- B) This Policy is intended to address mental health related issues only (i.e., to ensure that the student does not represent a danger to him/herself or others), and does not supersede the implementation of appropriate disciplinary action for violation of school regulations or actions required by N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-12 or N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.3, as described in policies and explained in the Code of Student Conduct. Thus, depending on the nature of the incident, the student may also be subject to disciplinary consequences.

III) Procedures for Addressing a Student Crisis Situation

- A) In situations where a student presents as an imminent danger to himself/herself or others, school emergency procedures shall be followed.
- B) Staff members shall immediately notify the School Principal, or his/her designee, of any potential student crisis situation. Staff members should further maintain direct supervision of the student (where it is safe to do so) to ensure the student's safety.



- C) In response to each report of a potential student crisis situation, the School Principal (or designee) shall immediately notify:
 - 1) The Student Crisis Intervention Team (or other designated team/individual), so that an Initial Assessment of the student may occur;
 - 2) The Superintendent of Schools; and
 - 3) The student's parent or legal guardian.
- D) The "Student Crisis Intervention Team" shall consist of the Principal, Vice-Principal, guidance counselor, school psychologist, student assistance coordinator, crisis counselor, social worker, and/or any other individual designated by the Principal.
- E) In response to each report, the Student Crisis Intervention Team shall conduct an Initial Assessment (for depression, suicidal ideation, intent to harm, and overall level of risk), which may include a student interview, to assess whether or not the student presents as a potential danger to himself/herself or others, and to determine whether or not the student requires a mental health assessment and clearance prior to reinstatement.
- F) Provisions shall be made for the appropriate care and supervision of the student pending either: (1) a determination by the Student Crisis Intervention Team that the student's exclusion is not required; (2) the student's release to his or her parent/guardian; or (3) the student's removal for medical care.

IV) Evaluation and Reinstatement

- A) If the Student Crisis Intervention Team determines that the student presents a potential danger to him/herself or others and requires a mental health assessment and clearance prior to reinstatement, the Principal shall notify the student's parent/guardian of this determination.
- B) The assessment must be completed by a licensed or certified mental health professional (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or psychiatric nurse) selected by the district or the parent/guardian.



- 1) Assessments completed by evaluators selected by the school district shall be at the expense of the school district.
 - 2) Assessments completed by evaluators selected by the student's parent/guardian shall be at the expense of the parent/guardian.
- C) For purposes of the assessment, it is necessary for the evaluator to have access to all relevant information regarding the student and the incident giving rise to the exclusion. The student's parent/guardian shall be asked to provide consent for a member of the Student Crisis Intervention Team to contact the professional completing the evaluation to provide necessary background information. However, if a parent/guardian cannot be reached and the student is screened and/or assessed by the appropriate school personnel as being in imminent danger of harming him/herself or others, the school may initiate an immediate assessment.
- D) The mental health assessment must, minimally, include the following:
- 1) Information identifying the student;
 - 2) Medical and family history;
 - 3) Review of presenting problem or incident;
 - 4) Mental status examination;
 - 5) Diagnosis, if relevant;
 - 6) Triggers for reoccurrence;
 - 7) Recommendations for follow-up services, as appropriate; and
 - 8) Other information deemed relevant by the evaluator.
- E) The clearance letter for the student's return to school must, minimally, include the following:
- 1) Evaluator's name and license number;
 - 2) Student's name and date of birth;



- 3) Confirmation that the evaluator assessed the student in accordance with the standards set forth in Section IV.D of this Policy following and in connection with the precipitating school-based incident;
 - 4) The date of the assessment; and
 - 5) A specific statement that the student does not present as a danger to him/herself or others.
- F) If the parent/guardian assumes the cost of the assessment (by a provider of his/her own choosing), the resulting report is his/her property, and will require his/her consent before being released to the school district. However, the required information (see Section IV.E above) must still be included in the clearance letter. The school district also reserves the right to obtain its own assessment by an evaluator of its choosing.
- G) Regardless of whether the school district obtains an assessment by an evaluator of its selection or relies upon the assessment and/or clearance letter by an evaluator the parent/guardian selects, the final determination as to the student's readiness to return to school rests with the school district.

V) Re-Entry to School

Following the District's receipt of the school clearance letter, the District shall schedule a reentry meeting with the child, his/her parent/guardian, and appropriate school district personnel. Reentry meeting discussion shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A) Consideration of CST referral;
- B) Discussion regarding follow-up treatment, as necessary;
- C) Discussion regarding school access to additional evaluative information (beyond clearance letter); and
- D) Discussion regarding the student's readiness to return to school.

VI) Instruction During Exclusion



Students will be provided with appropriate home or other out-of-school instruction in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10.1 et seq. during any period of exclusion.

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:40A-12 (discussing student examination by medical professional)
N.J.A.C. 6A: 32-7.1 (discussing confidentiality of student record information)
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.3 (discussing student examination by a medical professional)
N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-10.1 et seq. (providing for student instruction during the exclusion period)
Kopera v. West Orange Bd. of Educ., 60 N.J. Super. 289 (App. Div. 1960) (outlining standard applied in review of Board actions in requiring medical assessment and clearance).
M.F. o/b/o S.L.T. v. Bd of Educ. of Neptune, OAL Dkt. No. EDU 8583-96, 97 N.J.A.R.2d (EDU) 578, initial decision (March 27, 1997) aff'd, Comm. Ed. (May 19, 1997), aff'd, St. Bd. (September 3, 1997) (upholding Board decision to require immediate psychiatric evaluation for student threatening and taking actions in furtherance of a suicide attempt).
T.L. o/b/o T.L. v. Bd. of Educ. of Middletown, OAL Dkt. No. EDU 6671-01, aff'd Comm. Ed. (June 13, 2002) (upholding Board decision to require psychiatric or psychological examination of student suspended for developing a "hit-list" naming other students and teachers).

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