1. Purpose

The Joint Operating Committee is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt; and to promote access to suicide awareness and prevention resources.

Teen suicide is a growing problem in society today, with statistics rising dramatically in recent years. It is now the third most common form of death among teens, following accidental death and homicide. Warning signs in a suicidal person, such as statements, ideations, or threats, should always be taken seriously.

2. Authority

In compliance with state law and regulations, and in support of Lehigh Career & Technical Institute’s (LCTI’s) suicide prevention measures, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents/guardians, the building principal and/or supervisor or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare or safety of the student or any other person is deemed to be at risk.

3. Guidelines

LCTI shall utilize a multifaceted approach to suicide prevention which integrates school and community-based supports.

LCTI shall notify LCTI employees, students and parents/guardians of this policy and shall post the policy on LCTI’s website.

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

Protocols for Administration of Student Education

Students shall receive age-appropriate education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, how to recognize risk factors and warning signs, as well as help-seeking strategies for self or others including how to engage school LCTI resources and refer friends for help.

Lessons shall contain information on comprehensive health and wellness, including emotional, behavioral and social skills development.
Protocols for Administration of Employee Education

All LCTI employees, including but not limited to secretaries, coaches, bus drivers and custodians, shall receive information regarding risk factors, warning signs, response procedures, referrals, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

As part of the LCTI’s professional development plan, professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six (6) through twelve (12) shall participate in four (4) hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training every five (5) years.

Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to guidance counselors, LCTI’s mental health professionals and school nurses.

Resources for Parents/Guardians

LCTI may provide parents/guardians with resources including, but not limited to, health promotion and suicide risk, including characteristics and warning signs; and information about local behavioral/mental health resources.

METHODS OF PREVENTION

The methods of prevention utilized by LCTI include, but are not limited to, early identification and support for students at risk; education for students, staff and parents/guardians; and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts.

A suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the Director of Student Services to act as a point of contact for issues relating to suicide. This may be an existing school LCTI employee. The Director of Student Services shall be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy.

Early identification of individuals exhibiting several factors or of individuals exhibiting warning signs is crucial to LCTI’s suicide prevention efforts. To promote awareness, LCTI employees, students and parents/guardians should be educated about suicidal risk factors and warning signs.
**Risk factors** refer to personal or environmental characteristics that are associated with suicide including, but not limited to:

- **Behavioral Health Issues/Disorders:**
  - Depression.
  - Substance abuse or dependence.
  - Previous suicide attempts.
  - Self injury.

- **Personal Characteristics:**
  - Hopelessness/Low self-esteem.
  - Loneliness/Social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging.
  - Poor problem-solving or coping skills.
  - Impulsivity/Risk-taking/recklessness.

- **Adverse/Stressful Life Circumstances:**
  - Interpersonal difficulties or losses.
  - Disciplinary or legal problems.
  - Bullying (victim or perpetrator).
  - School or work issues.
  - Physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
  - Exposure to peer suicide.

- **Family Characteristics:**
  - Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior.
  - Family mental health problems.
Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Warning signs include, but are not limited to:

- Expressions such as hopelessness, rage, anger, seeking revenge, feeling trapped, anxiety, agitation, no reason to live or sense of purpose.
- Recklessness or risky behavior.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society.
- Dramatic mood changes.

**Referral Procedures**

Any LCTI employee who has identified a student who is exhibiting risk factors or who has an indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for further assessment and intervention.

**Documentation**

LCTI shall document the reasons for referral, including specific warning signs and risk factors identified as indications that the student may be at risk.

**METHODS OF INTERVENTION**

The methods of intervention utilized by LCTI include, but are not limited to, responding to suicide threats, suicide attempts in LCTI, suicide attempts outside of LCTI, and completed suicide. Suicide intervention procedures shall address the development of an emotional or mental health safety plan for students identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

**Procedures for Students at Risk**

A LCTI-approved suicide assessment instrument may be used by trained mental health staff such as counselors, psychologists, social workers.
Parents/Guardians of a student identified as being at risk of suicide shall be notified by LCTI. If LCTI suspects that the student’s risk status is the result of abuse or neglect, LCTI staff shall immediately notify Children and Youth Services.

LCTI shall identify mental health service providers to whom students can be referred for further assessment and assistance.

**Mental health service providers** – may include, but not be limited to, hospital emergency departments, psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and primary care providers.

LCTI shall create an emotional or mental health safety plan to support a student and the student’s family if the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide.

### Students With Disabilities

For students with disabilities who are identified as being at risk for suicide or who attempt suicide, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Joint Operating Committee policy.

If a student is identified as being at risk for suicide or attempts suicide and the student may require special education services or accommodations, the Director of Special Education or designee shall be notified and shall take action to address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Joint Operating Committee policy.

### Documentation

LCTI shall document observations, recommendations and actions conducted throughout the intervention and assessment process including verbal and written communications with students, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.

The Executive Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations providing recommended guidelines for responding to a suicide threat.
METHODS OF RESPONSE TO SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT

The methods of response to a suicide or a suicide attempt utilized by LCTI include, but are not limited to:

1. Identifying and training LCTI’s crisis response/crisis intervention team.
2. Determining the roles and responsibilities of each crisis response team member.
3. Notifying students, employees and parents/guardians.
4. Working with families.
5. Responding appropriately to the media.
6. Collaborating with community providers.

The Executive Director or designee shall develop administrative regulations with recommended guidelines for responding to a suicidal act or attempt on LCTI grounds or during a LCTI-sponsored event.

Re-Entry Procedures

A student’s excusal from attendance after a mental health crisis and the student’s return to LCTI shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations.

A LCTI-employed mental health professional, the building principal or suicide prevention coordinator shall meet with the parents/guardians of a student returning to LCTI after a mental health crisis, and, if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and applicable next steps to ensure the student’s readiness to return to LCTI.

When authorized by the student’s parent/guardian, the designated LCTI employee shall coordinate with the appropriate outside mental health care providers.

The designated LCTI employee will periodically check in, as needed, with the student to facilitate the transition back into LCTI community and address any concerns.
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<tr>
<th>SC 1526</th>
<th><strong>REPORT PROCEDURES</strong></th>
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<td>Effective documentation assists in preserving the safety of the student and ensuring communication among LCTI staff, parents/guardians and mental health service providers.</td>
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<td>When a LCTI employee takes notes on any conversations or situations involving or relating to an at-risk student, the notes should contain only factual or directly observed information, not opinions or hearsay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As stated in this policy, LCTI employees shall be responsible for effective documentation of incidents involving suicide prevention, intervention and response.</td>
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<td>The suicide prevention coordinator shall provide the Executive Director with a copy of all reports and documentation regarding the at-risk student. Information and reports shall be provided, as appropriate, to guidance counselors, LCTI mental health professionals and LCTI nurses.</td>
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<tr>
<th>SC 1526</th>
<th><strong>SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION RESOURCES</strong></th>
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<td>A listing of resources regarding suicide awareness and prevention shall be attached to this policy.</td>
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<th>SC 1526</th>
<th>Should a student currently enrolled at Lehigh Career &amp; Technical Institute be considered a suicidal risk, the following steps shall be taken:</th>
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<td>1. Notify the school nurse, who shall contact a parent, relative, or guardian.</td>
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<td>2. Notify and/or bring the student to the student's counselor, who shall develop a professional opinion by interviewing the student:</td>
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<td>a. About any feelings of hopelessness and the length of time of such feelings.</td>
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<td>b. About any thoughts about killing himself/herself and how persistent and strong the thoughts are.</td>
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<td>c. Concerning whether any plans have been made, how detailed the plans are, and whether any preliminary actions have been taken.</td>
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<td>3. Contact appropriate sending school personnel.</td>
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<td>4. Inform the principal's/Supervisor of Pupil Services offices.</td>
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A parent, relative, or guardian of the student shall be contacted to pick up the student and proceed to any emergency facility. If necessary, the school nurse or designated staff member may accompany the student. If contact cannot be made, appropriate arrangements shall be made with the sending school to meet the student upon arrival.

School staff shall not permit the issue of confidentiality to interfere with necessary action in the case of a life-threatening situation.

1. A high risk would be characterized by feelings of hopelessness, a detailed suicide plan, written statements, history of a previous attempt, chronically self-destructive life-style combined with severe loss or threat of loss, anniversary of a loss, inability to accept help, paucity of resources and/or method of suicide is available. If this determination is made:
   a. Do not let the student out of sight.
   b. The parent must be notified immediately.
   c. Contact Crisis Intervention Hotline.
   d. The physical process of uniting the client with crisis intervention must be clearly established.
   e. Information should be shared with appropriate instructional staff as soon as possible.

2. A medium risk would be characterized by some threat of ending it all through explicit statements, no concrete plan, does not have a method of completing an attempt, probably lacking any support from a professional or significant others, or has not exhibited any radical changes. If this determination is made:
   a. The parent must be notified as soon as possible.
   b. Counseling must be offered on a regular basis for intervention to an outside source.
   c. Student and parent must be made aware of available community assistance in an emergency.
   d. If the family has not contacted an intervention agency/person, counselor is responsible for documenting the referral recommendation(s) to the family.
3. A low risk would be characterized by vague feelings of hopelessness, no suicidal plans, no explicit written or verbal threats, and supportive help available. If this determination is made:

   a. The counselor shall make every reasonable effort to encourage the student to involve his/her family at the earliest possible time.

   b. Notify significant school others or need to know personnel. Low risk pupils often benefit from supportive discussions, group support, and teacher support. Try to help the pupil develop relationships.

   c. Provide supportive counseling. Refer the student and parent to an outside source.

   d. Follow-up to be sure that contact has been made.

Should a student enrolled in a program at the school be considered a suicidal risk during the summer months when school support personnel are not available, the following steps shall be taken:

1. Contact the immediate supervisor of that program.

2. Contact the Pupil Services Office.

3. Contact the principal’s office.

References:

School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 1526

State Board of Education Regulations – 22 PA Code Sec. 12.12

Joint Operating Committee Policy – 103.1, 113, 113.2, 117, 146, 204, 207, 216, 236, 248, 249, 333, 433, 805, 806