A. Purpose

To articulate the process for Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) staff, coaches, volunteers, and club sponsors to report statements of suicide or self-harm or both that are made by students.

B. Background

Suicide is a leading cause of death among young people and a major public health concern. The Board of Education of Frederick County (Board) and Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) recognize the critical importance of mental health in students' academic success and overall well-being, and that physical and mental health significantly impacts students' educational outcomes and plays a crucial role in students' overall wellbeing. The Board and FCPS are committed to promoting the health and well-being of all FCPS students, and support any and all efforts to identify students who are at risk for suicide and for staff to intervene, support, and refer students to appropriate resources and help. FCPS certificated staff and non-certificated staff are required to complete annual training concerning the support of students at risk of self-harm or suicidal attempt or ideation. In addition to all FCPS staff, the Board's expectation is that Volunteers, Coaches, and Club Sponsors will also receive annual training. This training will better equip them to recognize risk factors, identify warning signs, understand intervention procedures, and access available resources.

C. Definitions

1. "At-Risk" is defined to mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

2. "Coach" is defined to mean an individual, either paid or volunteer, who teaches, guides, and supports student athletes to help them improve their skills, performance, and teamwork in a sport.

3. "Club Sponsor" is defined to mean an individual, such as a teacher, administrator, or volunteer, who is responsible for overseeing and supporting a student club or extracurricular organization.

4. "Emergency Evaluation Petition" (EP) is defined to mean a legal process to require an individual to submit to a mental health evaluation.

5. "FCPS Mental Health Professional" is defined to mean an FCPS employee who serves in the role of Community Agency School Services (CASS) social worker, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or school therapist.

6. "Mental Health" is defined to mean a state of mental, emotional, and cognitive health that can impact perceptions, choices and actions affecting wellness and functioning.

7. "Parent" is defined to mean a biological or adoptive parent, a court-appointed custodian or guardian, a foster parent, or a caregiver (as defined by the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code or as designated by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement).

8. "Risk Factors" is defined to mean characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may attempt to take their life.

9. "School Property" or "School Grounds" is defined to mean any school, including a charter school, or other FCPS facility, including grounds owned or operated by FCPS, FCPS buses and other FCPS vehicles, chartered vehicles, and the facility and/or grounds of any FCPS-sponsored activity involving students.

10. "Self-Harm" is defined to mean behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself, which can be either non-suicidal or suicidal in nature.

11. "Suicide" is defined to mean death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

12. "Suicide Attempt" is defined to mean a self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to die.

13. "Suicidal Behavior" is defined to include suicide attempts, injury to oneself associated with at least some level of intent, developing a plan or strategy for suicide, gathering the means for a suicide plan, or any other overt action or thought indicating intent to end one's life.

14. "Suicidal Ideation" is defined to include thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death.

15. "Volunteer" is defined to include parents and other family members of FCPS students, as well as other members of the community interested in the education of children, who are willing to donate their time and energies to support FCPS students.

D. Procedures

1. **Staff Responsibilities**
   a. Any FCPS staff member other than an FCPS Mental Health Professional who is witness to a student's statement suggesting self-harm or suicidal behavior or ideation or believes a student may be at risk for self-harm or suicidal behavior or ideation must promptly report the concern to the appropriate FCPS Mental Health Professional. Such statements may be communicated as verbal or written comments, electronic communications, postings, or drawings. If the statement is part of a written assignment, the staff member must provide a copy of the assignment to the school counselor.
   b. The staff member will escort the student or will call for an escort for the student to an

FCPS Mental Health Professional or to the school-based administrator or their designee, if an FCPS Mental Health Professional is not available.

c. The staff member must ensure the student is safely supervised until the student is transferred to the FCPS Mental Health Professional, or to the school-based administrator or their designee.

2. **FCPS Mental Health Professional Responsibilities**
   a. An FCPS Mental Health Professional will promptly assess the student to determine next steps based on the level of lethality.
   b. If the student is deemed potentially suicidal, the FCPS Mental Health Professional will ensure that the student is supervised until the student's family or other appropriate agency takes responsibility for the student.
   c. The FCPS Mental Health Professional will immediately inform the student's parents about the situation and the concern. The FCPS Mental Health Professional will also complete the Report of Suicide, Homicide, Self-Injury Intent or Attempt Form.
   d. The FCPS Mental Health Professional must provide the student and their family with appropriate mental health resources.
   e. If deemed necessary, the FCPS Mental Health Professional may recommend, but not require, that the student be evaluated at a mental health facility and share appropriate resources and contact information.
   f. If it is determined that the student is not suicidal, the FCPS Mental Health Professional will consult with the school-based administrator or their designee and, in consultation with the student's parent, determine the appropriate steps for the student's release at the end of the day.

3. **School-Based Administrator Responsibilities**
   a. If an FCPS Mental Health Professional is unavailable, the school-based administrator or their designee must ensure the student is safely supervised and consult with the Office of Student Services staff by phone.
   b. If the student is deemed suicidal or high risk, the school-based administrator or their designee will ensure that the student is supervised until the student's family or other appropriate authority or agency takes responsibility for the student.
   c. If it is determined that the student is not suicidal, the school-based administrator or their designee will decide, in consultation with the student's parent, on the appropriate steps for the student's release at the end of the day.

4. **Office of Student Services (OSS) Responsibilities**
   a. The OSS is available as a resource for questions about the process or to support a student who is considered at-risk for self-harm or suicidal behavior or ideation.
   b. The OSS is responsible for creating the required annual training for all FCPS staff, Volunteers, and Coaches.
   c. The OSS is required to collect and analyze data related to statements of suicide, homicide, and self-harm. School-based staff and offices are expected to provide data to OSS when requested.

5. **Volunteer, Coach, and Club Sponsor Responsibilities**

a. A Volunteer, Coach, and/or Club Sponsor who believes a student is at risk for self-harm or suicidal behavior or ideation must stay with the student and immediately notify an FCPS Mental Health Professional or the administrator/designee supervising the activity/event.
b. The Volunteer, Coach, or Club Sponsor must ensure the student is safely supervised until the student is transferred to an FCPS Mental Health Professional or to the school-based administrator or their designee.
c. The expectation for supervision of a student who is believed to be at risk for self-harm or suicidal behavior or ideation while on a school-sponsored trip off campus (*i.e.*, a field trip) is the same and should be handled in accordance with the requirements of FCPS Regulation 414-01, *Field Trips* (formerly 400-05).

6. **911 Calls**
   a. Authorized school staff may call 9-1-1 if necessary.
   b. Notwithstanding the above, if there is an emergent, immediate, and imminent threat, any individual may contact 9-1-1.
   c. If there is no immediate and imminent threat, then the individual should contact the school-based administrator or their designee and, if available, an FCPS Mental Health Professional.

7. **Mandatory Training**
   a. **Certificated and Non-Certificated Staff**
      i. Training for certificated staff with regular student contact must cover the skills necessary to understand and respond to youth suicide risk, identify professional resources for students in crisis, recognize behavioral health issues, address trauma or violence experienced outside of school, and respond to mental health, safety, and social-emotional well-being concerns.
      ii. All school personnel must complete the required training by September 30 each year.
   b. **Volunteers, Coaches, and Club Sponsors.** All Volunteers, Coaches, and Club Sponsors must annually register and complete the "Child Abuse & Neglect and Suicide Statements by Students" training module, and achieve a minimum score of 80% on the assessment to pass.

8. **Emergency Evaluation Petition**
   a. An EP is used as a last resort when de-escalation efforts to assure safety have not been successful.
   b. The EP process is not an avenue to obtain mental health services; it is for extreme student mental health emergencies. Often it is possible to collaborate with the parents/legal guardians of the student to obtain mental health support and avoid the involvement of emergency services (*i.e.,* law enforcement and an emergency medical transport).
   c. The only individuals who may "EP" a student are clinical mental health professionals as required by the Maryland Department of Health such as licensed certified social worker-clinical (LCSW-C), licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC), or licensed clinical psychologist (PhD or PsyD), and law enforcement officers.

d. **Required actions when qualified personnel are contemplating the need for EP**
   i. The clinically licensed mental health provider should remain with the student.
   ii. Notify the school administrator immediately.
   iii. Notify the student's parents/legal guardians and inform them of concerns and whenever possible a school-based mental health professional should make the call to parents with an administrator.
   iv. Determine next steps to address current concerns:
      1. Parents/legal guardians may assume supervision of their child and voluntarily transport the child for further evaluation if a clinically licensed mental health professional determines it is safe and appropriate to do so. (This action does not constitute an emergency petition.)
      2. If parents/legal guardians do not follow-through with ensuring a child is evaluated, a report of neglect shall be made to Child Protective Services.
      3. School staff can request that a law enforcement officer follows the parents/legal guardians to the hospital.
      4. If it is determined that the parent/legal guardian cannot ensure the safety of the student through voluntary transport for a crisis evaluation, then the emergency petition process shall be instituted.

e. **Required Actions when qualified personnel institute the EP process**
   i. Once a licensed mental health professional completes the EP form, it must be given to the responding law enforcement officer who assumes care and custody of the student.
   ii. Compliance with emergency petitions is not voluntary, and requires that the student be taken to a hospital emergency room for further evaluation.
      1. Parents/legal guardians cannot refuse to have the child transported to a hospital for evaluation.
      2. If parents/legal guardians attempt to interfere with this process, a report of neglect shall be made to Child Protective Services.

f. **Transportation**
   i. Transportation to the hospital from FCPS property is determined by the law enforcement officer responding.
   ii. Transportation may be by police vehicle or ambulance.
   iii. When a student is transported to the hospital, an FCPS employee should:
      1. When possible, have the student exit the school in a discreet manner.
      2. Accompany/follow the student if the parent/legal guardian is not already present.
      3. Ensure that the person who accompanies the student to the hospital has the parent contact information, the student's emergency health information, and administrator contact information.
      4. Discuss with the individual accompanying the student to the hospital the possibility of the event extending beyond the normal school day.

E. Related Information

1. **Board Policy**
   a. Policy 446, *Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training*

(https://apps.fcps.org/legal/documents/446)

2. **Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)**
   a. COMAR 13A.07.11, *Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training* (https://fcps-md.info/COMAR_13A-07-11)
   b. COMAR 13A.12.04, *Educator Licensure, Specialists* (https://fcps-md.info/COMAR_13A-12-04)

3. **FCPS Regulations**
   a. Regulation 413-01, *Volunteers* (formerly 400-86) (https://apps.fcps.org/legal/documents/413-01)
   b. Regulation 414-01, *Field Trips* (formerly 400-05) (https://apps.fcps.org/legal/documents/414-01)

4. **FCPS Resources**
   a. FCPS / Families & Students / Office of Student Services / Counseling (https://www.fcps.org/families_students/student_services/counseling)
   b. FCPS / Families & Students / Office of Student Services / Psychological Services (https://www.fcps.org/families_students/student_services/psychological_services)
   c. FCPS / Families & Students / Student Code of Conduct (https://www.fcps.org/families_students/student_code_of_conduct)
   d. **Forms**
      i. Report of Suicide, Homicide, Self-Injury Intent or Attempt Form

5. **Maryland Statutes**
   a. Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 6-122 (https://fcps-md.info/MD_Educ_Code_6-122)
   b. Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 6-704.1 (https://fcps-md.info/MD_Educ_Code_6-704-1)
   c. Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-431 (https://fcps-md.info/MD_Educ_Code_7-431)
   d. Md. Code Ann., Health Gen. T., Subt. 6

F. Regulation History (Maintained by Legal Services)

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