

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING A STUDENT'S RETURN TO SCHOOL

These guidelines will help staff plan for a student's return to school after a suicide attempt or mental health crisis. In addition to meeting regularly with the student, the staff member facilitating the student's return should do the following:

1. Become familiar with the basic information about the case, including:
 - How the student's risk status was identified
 - What precipitated the student's high-risk status or suicide attempt
 - What medication(s) the student is taking
2. With the family's agreement, serve as the school's primary link to the parents and maintain regular contact with the family:
 - Call or meet frequently with the family
 - Facilitate referral of the family for family counseling, if appropriate
 - Meet with the student and his or her family and relevant school staff (e.g., the school psychologist or social worker) about what services the student will need upon returning to school
3. Serve as liaison to other teachers and staff members, with permission of the family, regarding the student, which could involve the following:
 - Ask the student about his or her academic concerns and discuss potential options
 - Educate teachers and other relevant staff members about warning signs of another suicide crisis
 - Meet with appropriate staff to create an individualized reentry plan prior to the student's return and discuss possible arrangements for services the student needs
 - Modify the student's schedule and course load to relieve stress, if necessary.
 - Arrange tutoring from peers or teachers, if necessary.
 - Work with teachers to allow makeup work to be extended without penalty.
 - Monitor the student's progress.
 - Inform teachers and other relevant staff members about the possible side effects of the medication(s) being taken by the student and the procedures for notifying the appropriate staff member (e.g., the school nurse, psychologist, or social worker) if these side effects are observed. When sharing information about medical treatment, you need to comply with FERPA and HIPAA.

4. Follow up behavioral and/or attendance problems of the student by:

- Meet with teachers to help them understand appropriate limits and
- Discuss concerns and options with the student
- Consult with the school's discipline administrator

Consult with the student's mental health service provider to understand whether, for example, these behaviors could be associated with medication being taken by the student

- Monitor daily attendance by placing the student on a sign-in/sign-out attendance sheet to be signed by the classroom teachers and returned to the attendance office at the end of the school day
- Make home visits or have regularly scheduled parent conferences to review attendance and discipline record
- Facilitate counseling for the student specific to these problems at school

5. If the student is hospitalized, obtain the family's agreement to consult with the hospital staff regarding issues such as:

- Deliver classwork assignments to be completed in the hospital or at home, as appropriate
- Allow a representative from school to visit the student in the hospital or at home with the permission of the parents
- Attend treatment planning meetings and the hospital discharge conference with the permission of the parents

6. Establish a plan for periodic contact with the student while he or she is away from school.

7. If the student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time, determine how to help him or her complete course requirements.

Compiled with information from DiCara, C., O'Halloran, S., Williams, L., & Canty-Brooks, C. (2009). Youth suicide prevention, intervention & postvention guidelines. Augusta, ME: Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program. Retrieved from <http://www.maine.gov/suicideldocs/Guidefines%2010-2009--w%20discl.pdf>