



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

Suicide Prevention Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all Gompers Preparatory Academy (GPA) students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. GPA:

- (a) Recognizes that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes.
- (b) Recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people.
- (c) Has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide.
- (d) Acknowledges our role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development.

The GPA suicide prevention policy is meant to be paired with other policies supporting the emotional and behavioral health of students.

The Gompers Preparatory Academy Board of Directors recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that an even greater number of youth consider and attempt suicide.

The possibility of suicide and suicidal ideation requires vigilant attention from our school staff. As a result, we are ethically and legally responsible for providing an appropriate and timely response in preventing suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths. We also must work to create a safe and nurturing campus that minimizes suicidal ideation in students.

Recognizing that it is the duty of GPA to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students, this policy aims to safeguard students and staff against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for students, staff, and families affected by suicide and attempts and loss. It is known that the emotional wellness of students greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of our students.

This policy is based on best practices in suicide prevention, and has been adopted with the understanding that suicide prevention activities decrease suicide risk, increase help seeking behavior, identify those at risk of suicide, and decrease suicidal behavior.

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families GPA leadership and Office of Student Affairs shall develop strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. These strategies shall include



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

professional development for school staff in all job categories who regularly interact with students or are in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide.

The GPA suicide prevention policy shall involve the input of GPA leadership, school counselors and parents/guardians/caregivers in planning, implementing and evaluating GPA's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. GPA will work in conjunction with local government agencies, community-based agencies, and other supports to identify additional resources.

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, GPA shall appoint Chief of Student Affairs, Lisa Maples as the Suicide Prevention Coordinator to serve as a point of contact. Student Affairs Program Specialist, Jane Kinyua will serve as the secondary suicide prevention coordinator.

This policy covers actions that take place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school vehicles, and at school sponsored out-of-school events where school staff are present, as well as identified messages on social media platforms.. This policy applies to the entire school community, including educators, school staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers. This policy will also cover appropriate school responses to suicidal or high risk behaviors that take place outside of the school environment.

DEFINITIONS

At risk A student who is defined as high risk for suicide is one who has made a suicide attempt, has the intent to die by suicide, or has displayed a significant change in behavior suggesting the onset or deterioration of a mental health condition. The student may have thought about suicide including potential means of death and may have a plan. In addition, the student may exhibit feelings of isolation, hopelessness, helplessness, and the inability to tolerate any more pain. This situation would necessitate a referral, as documented in the following procedures.

Crisis team A multidisciplinary team of primarily administrative, mental health, safety professionals, and support staff whose primary focus is to address crisis preparedness, intervention/response and recovery. These professionals have been specifically trained in crisis preparedness through recovery and take a leadership role in developing crisis plans, ensuring school staff can effectively execute various crisis protocols, and may provide mental health services for effective crisis interventions and recovery supports.

Mental health A state of mental and emotional being that can impact choices and actions that affect wellness. Mental health problems include mental and substance use disorders.

Postvention Suicide postvention is a crisis intervention strategy designed to reduce the risk of suicide and suicide contagion, provide the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

death, address the social stigma associated with suicide, and disseminate factual information after the suicide death of a member of the school community.

Risk assessment An evaluation of a student who may be at risk for suicide, conducted by the appropriate school staff (e.g., school psychologist, school counselor). This assessment is designed to elicit information regarding the student's intent to die by suicide, previous history of suicide attempts, presence of a suicide plan and its level of lethality and availability, presence of support systems, and level of hopelessness and helplessness, mental status, and other relevant risk factors.

Risk factors for suicide Characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take his or her life. Suicide risk tends to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time. Risk factors may encompass biological, psychological, and social factors in the individual, family, and environment.

Self-harm Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. Can be categorized as either non suicidal or suicidal. Although self-harm often lacks suicidal intent, youth who engage in self-harm are more likely to attempt suicide.

Suicide Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. Note: The coroner's or medical examiner's office must first confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of death.

Suicide attempt A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to kill himself or herself. A suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. A mixture of ambivalent feelings such as a wish to die and desire to live is a common experience with most suicide attempts. Therefore, ambivalence is not a sign of a less serious or less dangerous suicide attempt.

Suicidal behavior Suicide attempts, intentional injury to self 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.

Suicide contagion The process by which suicidal behavior or a suicide influences an increase in the suicidal behaviors of others. Guilt, identification, and modeling are each thought to play a role in contagion. Although rare, suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides.

Suicidal ideation Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior which may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or intent to end one's life is still considered suicidal ideation and should be taken seriously.



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

PREVENTION

MESSAGING

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, GPA has critically reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide.

STUDENTS

PREVENTION AND INSTRUCTION

Youth Suicide Prevention Programming will be administered by San Diego Youth Services (SDYS). The curriculum is focused on preventing suicide and bullying by implementing strategies that are trauma informed and which address upstream risk factors and improve protective factors among individuals and groups of high risk youth.

INSTRUCTION

At grades 7 and 9, GPA suicide prevention instruction shall be delivered to help students:

1. Understand the risk factors and warning signs associated with suicide and depression
 2. Minimize the stigma around seeking help for themselves or others
 3. Develop coping skills and understand the ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) model
- Suicide prevention instruction shall be taught through Science classes in 7th and 9th grade.

School- wide suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents/ guardians/caregivers need to be informed and actively involved in decisions regarding their child's welfare. Parents and guardians who learn the warning signs and risk factors for suicide are better equipped to connect their children with professional help when necessary.

Parents/ guardians should be advised to take every statement regarding suicide and wish to die seriously and avoid assuming that a child is simply seeking attention.

Parents and guardians can also contribute to important protective factors – conditions that reduce vulnerability to suicidal behavior – for vulnerable youth populations.

- GPA will provide instruction on warning signs and risk factors for parents
- Community resources for parents will be provided



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Access to school-based mental health services and supports directly improves students' physical and psychological safety, academic performance, cognitive performance, learning, and social-emotional development.

School counselors, school psychologists, school nurses as well as co-located mental health professionals from community based organizations ensure that services are high quality, effective, and appropriate to the school context. GPA school counselors are trained in the interconnectivity among school law, school system functioning, learning, mental health, and family systems. The school counselor can support teachers' abilities to provide a safe school setting and the optimum conditions for teaching and learning.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

GPA's director and GPA office of student affairs will carefully review available staff training to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

Training shall be provided for all school staff members and other adults on campus:

1. **School Policy Implementation.** A school site suicide prevention coordinator designated by the Director. The school suicide prevention coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of this policy. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the school suicide prevention coordinator.
2. **Staff Professional Development** All staff will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The professional development will include additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide. Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention will be provided to the school counseling team, family support team and school nurse. All school staff will review and receive documentation of GPA's **Suicidal Ideation Response Protocol**.
3. **Publication and Distribution** Language from this policy will be distributed annually and included in all student and teacher handbooks. This policy in its entirety will be posted on the GPA website staff wiki site.

ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

Chief of Student Affairs, Lisa Maples and Student Affairs Program Specialist, Jane Kinyua have received advanced training on suicide intervention and have been designated as the primary and secondary suicide prevention coordinators. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intention they shall promptly notify the primary designated suicide



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

prevention coordinator. If the primary suicide prevention coordinator is unavailable the staff shall promptly notify the secondary suicide prevention coordinator.

ACTION PLAN FOR IN-SCHOOL SUICIDE IDEATION

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, i.e., verbalizes about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as agitation or intoxication, the act of self-harm occurs, or a student self-refers, the student will be seen by a school counselor, psychologist or co-located mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no school counselor, psychologist, co-located mental health professional, or school administrator the school staff person will fill this role until one of the aforementioned professionals can be brought in.

1. School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety. Students who express suicidal ideation should never be left alone.
2. The suicide prevention coordinator will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible.
3. The school counselor or co-located mental health professional or suicide prevention coordinator will contact the student's parent or guardian, as described in the Parental Notification and Involvement section, and will assist the family with urgent referral. When appropriate, this may include calling PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Team), but in most cases will involve assisting the parent in setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider.
4. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission (Authorization for

Use or Disclosure of Health Information to and from Schools) to discuss the student's health with outside care, if applicable.

IN-SCHOOL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

In the case of an in-school suicide attempt, the health and safety of the student is paramount. In these situations:

1. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be received, following GPA emergency medical procedures.
2. School staff will supervise the student to ensure their safety, never leaving the student alone.
3. Staff will move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
4. If appropriate, staff will immediately request a mental health assessment for the student. The school counselor or suicide prevention coordinator will contact the student's parent or guardian, as described in the Parental Notification and Involvement section.



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

5. The suicide prevention coordinator will immediately notify the director regarding in-school suicide attempts.
6. GPA will engage as necessary the crisis team to assess whether additional steps should be taken to ensure student safety and well-being.
7. Staff will promise privacy and help, but will not promise confidentiality.
8. Students should only be released to parents/guardians/caregivers.

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), the school counselor, the suicide prevention coordinator and the school nurse (if medication is prescribed), will meet with the student's parent or guardian, and if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

1. The school counselor will coordinate re-entry and follow up support with the student, their parent or guardian, and any outside mental health care providers.
2. The parent or guardian will provide documentation from a mental health care provider that the student has undergone examination and has an aftercare plan.
3. The school counselor will periodically check in with students to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing needs.

OUT- OF-SCHOOL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress in an out-of-school location, the staff member will:

1. Call the police and/or emergency medical services, such as 911.
2. Inform the student's parent or guardian.
3. Inform Director Riveroll and Chief of Student Affairs, Lisa Maples (619-757-4839)

If the student contacts the staff member and expresses suicidal ideation, the staff member should maintain contact with the student (either in person, online, or on the phone). The staff member should then enlist the assistance of another person to contact the police while maintaining verbal engagement with the student.

Script for Out-of -School Suicide Attempt in Progress

Good Evening, this is Ms/Mr <insert staff member name> calling from Gompers Preparatory Academy, may I please speak to the parent or guardian of <insert student name>

Mr/Ms <insert parent/guardian> I am your child's teacher and I am contacting you regarding an immediate safety concern regarding your child. <Insert the facts only about how the information came to you>, example: your child just contacted me via text/email/and made comments to suggest that he/she is planning to commit suicide. _____ did not tell me where they



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

were, Our school policy is to contact the authorities and then contact the parents. I will stay on the line while you check to make sure _____ is okay.

Script for Out-of-School Suicidal Ideation Shared Via Social Media Post/Text:

“Good evening, this is Ms/Mr *<insert staff member name>* calling from Gompers Preparatory Academy, may I please speak to the parent or guardian of *<insert student name>*”

Mr/Ms *<insert parent/guardian>* I am your child’s teacher and I’m contacting you due to a safety concern that was just shared with me so I wanted to inform you immediately. I wanted to let you know as soon as this information was shared with me so that you can check in with your child. Ms/Mr *<insert parent/guardian name>* if they share that they are currently having suicidal thoughts, please call 911 and they can guide you with next steps. Mr/Ms *<insert parent/guardian name>* please know that I will be notifying my supervisor and your child’s school counselor that I made this call and we are here to support you and your child in every way that we can. Your child’s school counselor will follow-up with you both on the following school day”.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

In situations where a student is assessed at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt, the student’s parent or guardian will be informed as soon as practical by the director, designee, or school counselor. If the student has exhibited any kind of suicidal behavior, the parent or guardian should be counseled on “means restriction”, limiting the child’s access to mechanisms for carrying out a suicide attempt. Staff will also seek parental permission to communicate with outside mental health care providers regarding their child.

Through discussion with the student, the suicide prevention coordinator or school counselor will assess whether there is further risk of harm due to parent or guardian notification. If the director, school counselor or suicide prevention coordinator in their professional capacity, deem that contacting the parent or guardian would endanger the health or well-being of the student, they may delay such contact as appropriate. If contact is delayed, the reasons for the delay will be documented.

POSTVENTION

1. Development and Implementation of an Action Plan The crisis team will develop an action plan to guide school response following a death by suicide. A meeting of the crisis team to implement the action plan should take place immediately following news of the suicide death. The action plan will include the following steps:

- a) **Verify the death.** Staff will confirm the death and determine the cause of death through communication with a coroner’s office, local hospital, the student’s parent or guardian, or police department. Even when a case is perceived as being an obvious



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

instance of suicide, it should not be labeled as such until after a cause of death ruling has been made. If the cause of death has been confirmed as suicide but the parent or guardian will not permit the cause of death to be disclosed, the school will not share the cause of death but will use the opportunity to discuss suicide prevention with students.

- b) Assess the situation.** The crisis team will meet to prepare the postvention response, to consider how severely the death is likely to affect other students, and to determine which students are most likely to be affected. The crisis team will also consider how recently other traumatic events have occurred within the school community and the time of year of the suicide. The crisis team will deem appropriate responses needed.
- c) Share information.** Before the death is officially classified as a suicide by the coroner's office, the death can and should be reported to staff, students, and parents/guardians with an acknowledgement that its cause is unknown. Inform the faculty that a sudden death has occurred, preferably in a staff meeting. Write a statement for staff members to share with students. The statement should include the basic facts of the death (without providing details of the suicide method), recognition of the sorrow the news will cause, and information about the resources available to help students cope with their grief. Public address system announcements and school-wide assemblies will be avoided. The counseling team with school leadership will prepare a letter (with the input and permission from the student's parent or guardian) to send home with students that includes facts about the death, information about what GPA is doing to support students, the warning signs of suicidal behavior, and a list of resources available.
- d) Avoid suicide contagion.** It should be explained in the staff meeting described above that one purpose of trying to identify and give services to other high risk students is to prevent another death. The school counseling team will work with teachers to identify students who are most likely to be significantly affected by the death. In the staff meeting, the counseling team will review suicide warning signs and procedures for reporting students who generate concern.
- e) Initiate support services.** Students identified as being more likely to be affected by the death will be assessed by the school counselor to determine the level of support needed. The crisis team will coordinate support services for students and staff in need of individual and small group counseling. In concert with parents or guardians, crisis team members will refer to community mental health care providers to ensure a smooth transition from the crisis intervention phase to meeting underlying or ongoing mental health needs.
- f) Encourage parents/guardians to monitor their child's social networking pages.** Students often turn to social media as an outlet for communication information and for expressing their thoughts and feelings about death. Encourage parents to monitor websites for warning signs of suicidal behavior



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

- g) Develop memorial plans.** GPA will not create on-campus physical memorials (e.g. photos, flowers), funeral services, or fly the flag at half-mast because it may sensationalize the death and encourage suicide contagion. GPA will not cancel classes or activities for the funeral. Any school-based response will include a focus on how to prevent future suicides and prevention resources available.

2. External Communication The director or chief of staff will be the sole media spokesperson. Staff will refer all inquiries from the media directly to the spokesperson. The spokesperson will:

- a) Keep the suicide prevention coordinator informed of school actions relating to the death.
- b) Prepare a statement for the media including the facts of the death, postvention plans, and available resources. The statement will not include confidential information, speculation about victim motivation, means of suicide, or personal family information.
- c) Answer all media inquiries. If a suicide is to be reported by news media, the spokesperson should encourage reporters not to make it a front-page story, not to use pictures of the suicide victim, not to use the word suicide in the caption of the story, not to describe the method of suicide, and not to use the phrase “suicide epidemic” – as this may elevate the risk of suicide contagion. They should also be encouraged not to link bullying to suicide and not to speculate about the reason for suicide. Media should be asked to offer the community information on suicide risk factors, warning signs, and resources available.

LANGUAGE FOR STUDENT HANDBOOK

Protecting the health and well-being of all students is of utmost importance to GPA. The GPA board of directors has adopted a suicide prevention policy which will help to protect all students through the following steps:

1. Students will have the opportunity to learn about recognizing and responding to warning signs of suicide in friends, using coping skills, using support systems, and seeking help for themselves and others. This will occur in all 7th grade and 9th grade science classes.
2. GPA has designated a suicide prevention coordinator to serve as a point of contact for students in crisis and to refer students to appropriate resources.
3. When a student is identified as being at risk, they will be assessed by a school counselor, psychologist or school based mental health professional who will work with the student and help connect them to appropriate local resources.
4. Students will have access to national resources which they can contact for additional support, such as:
 - The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1.800.273.8255 (TALK), www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
 - The Trevor Lifeline – 1.866.488.7386, www.thetrevorproject.org
1. All students will be expected to help create a school culture of respect and support in which students feel comfortable seeking help for themselves or friends. Students are



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

encouraged to tell any staff member if they, or a friend, are feeling suicidal or are in need of help.

2. Students should also know that because of the life or death nature of these matters, confidentiality or privacy concerns cannot be promised while seeking help for students in crisis.

RESOURCES

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to young people showing signs of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care. YMHFA is an 8-hour interactive training for youth-serving adults without a mental health background. See the Mental Health First Aid Web page at <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course/course-types/youth/>

Free YMHFA Training is available on the CDE Mental Health Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp>

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) is a gatekeeper training that can be taught online. Just as people trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the Heimlich Maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. See the QPR Web site at <http://www.qprinstitute.com/>

SafeTALK is a half-day alertness training that prepares anyone over the age of fifteen, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper. See the LivingWorks Web page at <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk/>

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. See the LivingWorks Web page at <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/>

Kognito At-Risk is an evidence-based series of three online interactive professional development modules designed for use by individuals, schools, districts, and statewide agencies. It includes tools and templates to ensure that the program is easy to disseminate and measures success at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. See the Kognito Web page at <https://www.kognito.com/products/pk12/>

“More Than Sad: Suicide Prevention Education for Teachers and Other School Personnel”
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention <http://morethansad.org>



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 www.gompersprep.org

“Lifeguard Workshop Program” – The Trevor Project

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/section/education-training-for-adults>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: The lifeline is a 24-hour, toll free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis or their friends and loved ones. Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK). Callers are routed to the closest possible crisis center in their area.

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

San Diego Access Crisis Line 888-724-7240, 24-hour, 7 day a week free, confidential hotline.

Adapted from California, Department of Education Model School Suicide Prevention Policy, Maine Youth Suicide Prevention, Intervention & Postvention Guidelines; San Diego Youth Services; The Trevor Project; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention; American School Counselor Association and National Association Suicide Prevention