



Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy

(Based on Diocesan Policy 302.9)

Seton Catholic School

(Updated August 2025)

Statement:

Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention are a priority at **Seton Catholic School**. Staff and Students will be educated and supported in this area. Methods for addressing suicide will be in place to keep all informed.

Purpose:

Seton Catholic School adopts this policy in acknowledgment of the school's commitment to maintaining a safe school environment; to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students; to promote healthy development; and to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety and welfare of students, the school will work to educate school personnel and students on the actions and resources necessary to promote well-being and prevent suicide.

Definitions:

At-Risk for Suicide shall mean any youth with risk factors or warning signs that increase the likelihood of suicidal behavior.

Behavioral Health shall mean the emotion, behaviors and biology related to a person's mental well-being, their ability to function in everyday life and their concept of self.

Post-intervention shall mean activities which reduce risk and promote healing after a suicide death.

Prevention refers to efforts that seek to reduce the factors that increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors and increase the factors that help strengthen, support, and protect individuals from suicide.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress or "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

Suicide shall refer to death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicidal Act or Suicide Attempt shall mean a potentially self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person intended to kill him/herself; a suicidal act may result in death, injuries, or no injuries.

Suicide Threat shall mean a verbal or nonverbal communication that an individual intends to harm him/herself with the intention to die but has not acted on the behavior. Warning Signs are evidence-based indicators, often observable, that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the very near future.

Protocols:

1. All discussions about suicide will be taken seriously and addressed with the student, staff and parents as needed.
2. The principal will be notified of any discussion of suicidal ideation or attempts of suicide.
3. The *School Crisis Response Team* will be involved as needed. (See List attached)
4. The Catholic Schools Office Level I and Level II Crisis Line will be used as needed – 814-452-8990 – for additional support.

Methods of Prevention:

1. Teachers, parents, and students will be educated about the *Seton Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy*. The policy will also be posted on the school website.
2. Teachers will be required to get **four hours** of suicide awareness and prevention **training every five years**. This will be documented in their personnel files.
3. Seton will have teachers and the principal as “check-in” staff to support students who may need extra help during the school day – anxiety, depression, family issues, peer challenges, etc.
4. Students will be instructed on positive ways to deal with stress and other challenges through Health Classes in Gr. 5-8 and through Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) instruction in all grades. Books on the subject are available through the school library and the school office. Occasional visitors with strengths instructing in this area will be invited to speak at Seton.
5. Students will be instructed to let a trusted adult know in the school if someone they know or they themselves are contemplating suicide. Students may also use the ***Safe2SaySomething*** app. Seton will be notified anonymously if a case is reported.
6. **Information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student’s parents or guardians, the building administrator or other appropriate authority when the health, welfare, or safety of the student or other persons is clearly in jeopardy.**

Methods of Intervention:

1. Students/staff who are identified as having challenges with suicidal thoughts/actions will have family members notified immediately. *The Parent Notification Emergency Conference Regarding Suicide Risk Form* will be used. (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-A – Appendix, www.eriercd.org, *MyDioErie*.)
2. The principal will take all threats seriously and use the *Suicide Risk Severity Rating* as a guide to inform next steps. (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-A – Appendix, www.eriercd.org, *MyDioErie*.)

3. Any school personnel who observe a student exhibiting a warning sign for suicide, or who has another indication that a student may be contemplating suicide, shall refer the student for risk assessment and intervention in accordance with the school/system's referral procedure (See Step 2). Any threat in any form shall be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised. In cases of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, a student's confidentiality will be waived, except when involving the seal of confession.
4. If the student has been identified as being at increased risk of suicide, the school shall create a *School Safety Plan for Suicidal Ideation/Self-Harm* to support the student after the *Suicide Risk Severity Rating* is implemented and the parents have been notified. This safety plan will be created with the help of mental health professionals that are involved in the student's care and the student's parents. (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-C – Appendix, www.eriescd.org, *MyDioErie*.)
5. If an expressed suicide thought or intention is made known to any school personnel during a before or after school program, school-sponsored event or sport team and the building administrator or designee are not available, call 988 (1-800-273-TALK [8255]) or 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433). for help. Inform the building administrator of the incident and actions taken.
6. If a student has been out of school in treatment for mental health challenges involving suicidal ideation or suicidal attempts, A *Re-entry Meeting Form* will be completed before the student returns to school. (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-F – Appendix, www.eriescd.org, *MyDioErie*.)
7. If a student has a *School Safety Plan for Suicidal Ideation/Self-Harm* and/or a *Re-entry Meeting Form*, teachers and support staff who have involvement with the education of the student will receive the *Instructions for Teachers/Support Staff Form* to keep all informed for the safety of the student and his/her classmates as well. (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-D – Appendix, www.eriescd.org, *MyDioErie*.)
8. Counseling services will be recommended and, in some cases, required (See the *Suicide Risk Severity Scale*). The Diocese of Erie offers free, confidential support for staff of the school. *Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services* will be notified, 814-456-2091. The school nurse has given Seton a list of current mental health practitioners in our area that will be shared with staff and students' families when needed.
9. The school will work cooperatively with counselors by having parents/staff sign a release of information for the betterment of the staff/students.

Methods of Responding to an Attempted Suicide or a Suicide Death:

1. Staff will be notified immediately.
2. *School Crisis Response Team* will be notified and a meeting will be called. (See list Attached.)
3. The Diocesan Crisis Line will be called – 814-452-8990 – for guidance and further resource help as needed – counselors for the school, etc. The CSO Administrators will also be called.
4. The school may need to cancel classes in some cases. Parents will be notified through *School Messenger* if necessary.

Suicide Reporting Procedures:

1. Staff and Parents will be notified.
2. Diocese of Erie will be consulted for procedures for a press release if needed.

3. Students/staff will spend time working together to assess issues/needs that have been brought forward once time has been given to the initial grief involved.
4. Longer term counseling will be recommended for those students and staff who continue to struggle with the loss beyond the initial grief period.
5. Any memorials will be decided individually based on family and school discussions. (See *Making Decisions about School-Related Memorials* (Diocesan School Policies – 302.9 BP-E – Appendix, www.eriecd.org, MyDioErie.)

Education for Staff:

Four (4) hours of training in youth suicide awareness and prevention are required every five (5) years for professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades six through twelve. The Diocese of Erie is recommending **one hour yearly**, and that is what Seton will do. In-service time will be used for training, but those who miss the training will be required to complete it on their own.

****Website for FREE 30 minute courses: Prevent Suicide PA- www.pspalearning.com – Teachers need to make an account. - REQUIRED (Other suicide awareness/prevention training sites are also available - See resources section below.)**

Recommended Current Resources:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – Call 988 (1-800-273-8255); www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Prevent Suicide PA Learning: Teacher Education Videos for Required Instruction – 4 hours every 5 years – (Act 71) www.pspalearning.com

Prevent Suicide PA: <https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/webinars/>

National Institute of Mental Health: resources to raise awareness about suicide prevention

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) : <https://www.samhsa.gov/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <https://sprc.org/>

Jason Foundation: <https://jasonfoundation.com/>

The American Association of Suicidology: <https://suicidology.org/>

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers this analysis:
<https://www.usccb.org/committees/pro-life-activities/youth-suicidal-behavior>

Legal Ramifications: IMPORTANT

If a student suicide should occur and the school had an awareness of the issue, took no action or did not have a suicide awareness and prevention policy, the school could be liable.