



### **When a Student Attempts Suicide ...**

A student may make an actual attempt at school using any of a variety of means. If you encounter a student engaging in suicidal behavior, you must act promptly and decisively.

#### **WHAT TO DO:**

- **Be directive and calm.** Tell the student, “I want you to stop what you are doing; stand there and talk with me.” “Put that down.” “Hand me that.” “I’m listening.”
- **Get others to help you.** Mobilize someone to call 911 and inform an administrator. Identify someone to clear the scene of those who are not needed.
- **Engage the student.** Look at the student directly. Speak in a calm, low tone of voice. Buy time. Get the student to talk. Listen. Acknowledge his or her feelings. “You’re really angry.” “You must be feeling really hurt.”

#### **WHAT TO AVOID:**

- Don’t moralize (i.e. “You’re young; you have everything to live for.”)
- Don’t minimize the student’s problems (i.e. “You’ll find another girlfriend.”)
- Don’t leave the student alone (even if the student has to go to the bathroom.)
- Don’t move the student.
- Don’t put yourself or others in danger (i.e., grabbing for a gun or knife).

#### **IN ALL CASES:**

Show concern and ask questions in a straightforward and calm manner.

Show you are willing to discuss suicide without judgment. Open lines of communication.

Once back-up arrives, follow the school crisis plan for obtaining treatment, stabilizing the crisis, notification of parent/guardian, communication, and debriefing.