



Two Feathers School-Based Student Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training Policy

Suicide is a serious public health concern in the United States, especially among American Indian youth. Suicide rates for American Indian youth are higher than for any other racial or ethnic group in the United States. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for American Indian youth aged 10-24, with a rate that is two and a half times higher than the national average. To address this issue, a comprehensive school-based student suicide awareness and prevention training policy is necessary. This policy will provide evidence-based training to American Indian students in grades 6 through 12, in coordination with school-based mental health resources, regarding suicide prevention education and awareness, methods that students can use to seek help, and student resources for suicide awareness and prevention.

Policy Statement

This policy aims to reduce the incidence of violence, trauma, and suicide among American Indian students in grades 6 through 12 by providing evidence-based mental wellness promotion, including suicide prevention education, awareness, and resources. The policy will be implemented in public schools in Humboldt County by Two Feathers Native American Family Services. The program will serve all students through a tiered public health model. Targeted services will focus on culturally based intervention and referral for American Indian students in grades 6 through 12.

Policy Implementation

To implement this policy, Two Feathers Native American Family Service will take the following steps in collaboration with school districts where possible:

1. **Cultural Sensitivity:** It is important that this policy be culturally sensitive to the American Indian community. Suicide is a complex issue that is influenced by cultural factors, historical trauma, and social determinants of health. The curriculum and resources provided to students should reflect this complexity and be culturally appropriate.

Two Feathers shall work with American Indian community leaders and organizations to ensure that the policy is sensitive to the cultural and historical context of the community. The policy should be developed in consultation with American Indian educators, mental health professionals, and community members.

2. **Needs Assessment:** Conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific cultural and community factors that contribute to suicide among American Indian students in Humboldt County. This could involve talking to community members, conducting surveys, and reviewing existing data on suicide rates and risk factors. The school district may partner with Two Feathers to collect data and ensure information on their district is included in the needs assessment.

3. Provide suicide prevention resources: Two Feathers will provide students with targeted suicide prevention resources within the schools, such as brochures, posters, websites and information via social media. The resources will be made available in schools and online. This will include resources for targeted evidence-based prevention curriculum for American Indian students. Students need to be aware of the resources available to them if they or someone they know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings. These resources should include crisis hotlines and counseling services.
4. Suicide Prevention Education and Awareness: Students need to be educated on the signs and symptoms of suicidal ideation and behavior, as well as the risk factors associated with suicide. This education will be age-appropriate and culturally sensitive to the American Indian community. It will be delivered in a group setting and reinforced through other school-based and/or community-based activities.
5. Provide training for school staff: The school district will provide training for school staff on suicide prevention, including warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors. School staff will also be trained on how to respond to students who may be at risk for suicide and how to connect them with appropriate resources. The school district may collaborate with Two Feathers to provide time and space to provide suicide prevention and mental health promotion activities to students, teachers, administrators, and families.
6. Methods for Seeking Help: Students need to know where they can go for help if they are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings. This information will be readily available and easily accessible. Two Feathers will work with the schools to put a protocol in place for responding to students who are at risk for suicide.

Students are encouraged to seek help from a trusted adult, such as a teacher, counselor, or coach. Two Feathers will work with the school will publicize crisis hotline (988) or other crisis intervention resources available for students who need immediate assistance. These resources will be clearly advertised and posted in visible locations throughout the school.

7. Support and Referral: Ensure that students have access to support and referral resources. This will involve working with educators, school counselors, mental health providers, and Two Feathers on-site staff to ensure immediate referral.

A mental health services team that includes a counselor or therapist who is trained in suicide prevention will be placed in the school by Two Feathers and/or the school district. This team will be available to Native students who are at risk for suicide and will work with the student and their family to develop a safety plan and immediate engagement with more intensive levels of mental health treatment. Additional resources are available and include cultural healing programs and outreach groups.

8. Parent, Guardian, Family, and Community Engagement: Involve parents, guardians, family and the broader community in the program through outreach and education efforts. This



could involve hosting community events, workshops, or forums where parents and community members can learn about suicide prevention and receive resources and support.

9. Monitor and evaluate the program: Regularly evaluate the program's effectiveness in reducing suicide risk among American Indian students in Humboldt County. This may involve conducting surveys, focus groups, or other forms of feedback from students, parents, and community members. Two Feathers will work collaboratively with the schools to collect data on the number of students who access mental health resources and the number of suicide attempts and completions. The data will be used to inform future program development and implementation.

Overall, the program is collaborative, culturally appropriate, and evidence-based, with a focus on building resilience and promoting protective factors among American Indian youth in Humboldt County.

