

## **The Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism**

### ***The first-tier mechanism***

The first-tier aims to early identify students with higher suicidal risk, and to provide students concerned priority for timely support and help them seek professional counselling or treatment services at an early stage.

EDB urges school personnel to refer to “A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours” to preliminarily identify more vulnerable students and pay attention to whether they have warning signs of suicide. If necessary, schools can arrange students with higher-risk to conduct a preliminary mental health screening through effective screening tools. After screening, school guidance personnel should launch follow-up services. Schools should first discuss with the school’s inter-disciplinary team (including guidance masters/mistress, guidance personnel, school social workers and school-based educational psychologists) to flexibly deploy its manpower and resources to give priority to take care of and counsel students with higher suicidal risk. The school personnel are recommended to refer to the Guidelines on “How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems” to provide support to students as soon as possible, for example, guiding students to consider coping skills for overcoming difficulties and the support available for them, meeting with students regularly and providing them with group training, conducting individual counselling on relaxation techniques and coping methods, and arranging appropriate school-based support and activities, or providing students with information about relevant community resources. Schools must conduct continuous and close monitoring on students’ conditions, make good use of community resources and refer students with mental health needs to receive support services. Please refer to **Item 2** for details.

### ***The second-tier mechanism***

The second-tier mechanism is for the Government to organise an “off-campus support network” through inter-departmental, cross-professional and cross-sectoral collaboration to provide schools with enhanced “external support” in the short term. Social workers concerned have received professional training on how to support students with higher suicidal risk and can provide appropriate intervention services for students in need. If schools confirmed that the students, having been identified and provided with school-based intervention by the first-tier mechanism, have a high suicidal risk and need further support from the “off-campus support network”, they can contact the “off-campus support network” teams in their respective regions (please refer to the contact list at **Item 3**). If the schools deem it necessary to make a case referral, schools must first obtain the consent of the parents or guardians of students concerned,

and submit the referral form and parent or guardian consent form (**Item 4**) to the “off-campus support network” teams in the respective regions.

Please note that, in the past, the second-tier mechanism only covered publicly-funded secondary schools that did not participate in the SMHSS, and those newly identified cases that the schools did not have sufficient manpower to deal with. Starting from 1 November 2024, under the enhanced second-tier mechanism, publicly-funded secondary schools participating in the SMHSS and cases that are not newly identified can also seek support from the “off-campus support network” teams.

The “off-campus support network” teams will contact the students concerned as soon as possible and arrange follow-up services which include emergency intervention services such as assessment, support and counselling through individual, group or online mode. The team will also match students’ needs with community support services, such as integrated family service centres, integrated children and youth services centres and integrated community centres for mental wellness, to provide them with diverse and appropriate follow-up services. If the “off-campus support network” team, after contact and assessment, determines that the student has high suicidal risk, they will discuss with the parents whether it is necessary to refer the student to the psychiatric services of HA according to the third-tier mechanism below.

### ***The third-tier mechanism***

The third-tier mechanism is for schools to refer students with high suicidal risk (as opposed to those only with severe mental health needs) to the HA to receive psychiatric specialist outpatient services. Schools may refer eligible students with reference to the guide at **Item 5**. After discussing with the students’ parents, schools may issue a designated school principal referral form (**Item 6**) for parents to accompany the students to the psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics for triage assessment, and to receive necessary treatment and support services. School personnel may also accompany the students and their parents to the psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics as necessary to provide relevant information during the triage process, with a view to facilitating a more comprehensive assessment of the students’ condition by healthcare professionals. After the triage assessment, HA will prioritise the follow up of students with urgent conditions that necessitate prompt treatment. Before making referrals, schools should carefully evaluate whether the students concerned have high suicidal risk, so as to avoid comprising the chances to receive treatment of other patients who are on the waiting list of HA’s psychiatric services. For students assessed as routine (stable) cases waiting for psychiatric specialist outpatient services, schools may arrange for them to receive support in the school setting at the first-tier mechanism, as well as services from the “off-campus support network” at the second-tier mechanism. If the mental conditions of the students have changed, they may return to their respective psychiatric specialist outpatient clinic to receive re-assessment to determine whether there is a need to advance their consultation appointment

consultation appointment or seek treatment from the accident and emergency services. At the same time, HA has set up a telephone consultation hotline specifically for school principals (telephone number: 2742 4508) to provide them with professional advice.

If a student is severely injured, in a life-threatening situation or requires immediate support, the school should immediately activate the crisis management mechanism and take prompt action, including contacting the police for assistance or transferring the student to the hospital for treatment.