Self-injury is a complex behavior, separate and distinct from suicide that some individuals engage in for various reasons such as: to take risks, rebel, reject their parents’ values, state their individuality, or merely to be accepted. However, others may injure themselves out of desperation or anger to seek attention; to show their feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness; or because they have suicidal thoughts. Such individuals may suffer from serious mental health disorders such as depression or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some young children may resort to self-injurious acts from time to time but often grow out of it. Children with an intellectual disability or autism, as well as children who have been abused or abandoned may also show these behaviors. If you become aware that a student or someone you know is engaging in self-injurious behavior, take action and get help.

**General Information**

- Self-injury provides a way to manage overwhelming feelings and can be a way to bond with peers (rite of togetherness).
- Self-injury is defined as intentional tissue damage that can include cutting, severe scratching, pinching, stabbing, puncturing, burning, and ripping or pulling skin or hair.
- Tattoos and body piercings are not usually considered self-injurious behaviors unless they are done with the intention to hurt the body.
- Individual mental health services (therapy) can be effective when focused on reducing the negative thoughts and environmental factors that trigger self-injury.

**Here’s What You Can Do:**

**LISTEN**
- Assess for suicide risk.
- Listen without judgment.
- Ask open-ended questions, such as:
  - Tell me what happened?
  - How long have you been feeling this way?
  - Have you thought about suicide?

**PROTECT**
- Take action immediately and get help.
- Do not leave the student alone. Student should be supervised/monitored by a staff member, not a peer.
- Consider developing a safety/re-entry plan.
- Be cautious about giving punishments or negative consequences for the self-injurious behavior, as these may unintentionally encourage the behavior to continue.

**CONNECT**
- Connect the student with an administrator, crisis team member, or the Suicide Prevention Liaison(s) at your school to access and determine level of risk.
- Contact the Local District School Mental Health Coordinator or Mental Health Consultant for consultation and support.
- Contact the Department of Mental Health, law enforcement, or child protective services, as needed.
- Inform the parent/caregiver.
- Identify staff to monitor the student, as needed.

**MODEL**
- Remain calm and establish a safe environment to talk about self-injury.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about this behavior.
- Be aware of your tone. Displaying judgment, expressing anger or shock can cause the student to feel guilt or shame.

**TEACH**
- Provide information and education to parents/caregivers about suicide and self-injury.
- Teach students how to ask for help and identify adults they can trust at home and at school.
- Teach healthy ways to cope with stress, including deep breathing, writing/drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Provide options for school and community resources, including referrals to professional mental health services.

Follow the protocols and guidelines in BUL 2637.3 Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention.
SMH Clinics and Wellness Centers

North
Valley Clinic
6651 Balboa Blvd., Van Nuys 91406
Tel: 818-758-2300 | Fax: 818-996-9850

West
Crenshaw Wellness Center
3206 W. 50th St., Los Angeles 90043
Tel: 323-290-7737 | Fax: 323-290-7713

Washington Wellness Center
1555 West 110th St., Los Angeles 90043
Tel: 323-241-1909 | Fax: 323-241-1918

South
97th Street School Mental Health Clinic
Barrett Elementary School
439 W. 97th St., Los Angeles 90003
Tel: 323-754-2856 | Fax: 323-754-1843

San Pedro Clinic
704 West 8th St., San Pedro 90731
Tel: 310-832-7545 | Fax: 310-833-8580

Locke Wellness Center
316 111th St., Los Angeles 90063
Tel: 323-418-1055 | Fax: 323-418-3964

Carson Wellness Center
270 East 223rd St., Carson 90745
Tel: 310-847-7216 | Fax: 310-847-7214

East
Bell/Cudahy School Mental Health Clinic
Ellen Ochoa Learning Center
7326 S. Wilcox, Cudahy 90201
Tel: 323-869-1352 | Fax: 323-271-3657

Ramona Clinic
231 S. Alma Ave., Los Angeles 90063
Tel: 323-266-7615 | Fax: 323-266-7695

Gage Wellness Center
2880 Gage Ave., Huntington Park 90255
Tel: 323-826-1520 | Fax: 323-826-1524

Elizabeth LC Wellness Center
4811 Elizabeth St., Cudahy 90201
Tel: 323-271-3650 | Fax: 323-271-3657

Central
Belmont Wellness Center
180 Union Place, Los Angeles 90026
Tel: 213-241-4451 | Fax: 213-241-4465

Roybal Clinic
1200 West Colton St., Los Angeles 90026
Tel: 213-580-6415 | Fax: 213-241-4465

For clinic referrals visit: smh.lausd.net

School Mental Health
(213) 241-3841

Signs and Symptoms of Self-Injury

- Frequent or unexplained bruises, scars, cuts, or burns
- Frequent inappropriate use of clothing designed to conceal wounds (often found on the arms, thighs, or abdomen)
- Unwillingness to participate in activities that require less body coverage (swimming, physical education class)
- Secretive behaviors, spending unusual amounts of time in the bedroom, bathroom, or isolated areas
- Bruises on the neck, headaches, red eyes, ropes/clothing/belts tied in knots (signs of the “choking game”)
- General signs of depression, social-emotional isolation, and disconnectedness
- Possession of sharp objects (razor blades, shards of glass, thumb tacks)
- Evidence of self-injury in drawings, journals, pictures, texts, and social networking sites
- Statements of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

There is a difference between self-injury and suicidal acts, thoughts, and intentions. With suicide, there is an intent to die; whereas, with non-suicidal self-injury the reasons may include:

- Feel emotionally better
- Express desperation or anger
- Manage painful feelings of current or past trauma
- Punish oneself
- Feel pain or relief
- Have control of one’s body

A professional clinical assessment may be necessary to determine risk.

What should I do if a student is engaging in self-injurious behavior?

- Respond immediately
- Supervise the student
- Escort the student to a Crisis Team Member
- Contact the appropriate child protective agency when there is reasonable suspicion of abuse (see BUL-1347)

EMERGENCY INFORMATION / After Hours Services

If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911.
Los Angeles School Police Department (213) 625-6631.
For a psychiatric emergency, contact the Department of Mental Health 24-hour ACCESS Center at (800) 854-7771.

Resources for Parents/Caregivers & Children/Adolescents

Community Hotlines
Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Hotline
(877) 727-4747 (24-hour)
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(800) 273-TALK (8255) (24-hour)
Trevor Lifeline (866) 488-7386 (24-hour)
Teen Line (800) 852-8336 (6pm-10pm daily)

Online Resources
- http://www.didihirsch.org/
- http://www.thetrevorproject.org/
- http://teenline.org/
- http://teenline.org/understanding-suicide

Smartphone Apps
- MY3

Text and Chat Resources
Crisis Text Line – Free, 24/7, confidential
Text LA to 741741
Crisis Chat (11am-11pm, daily)
http://www.crisischat.org/chat
Teen Line - text “TEEN” to 839863 (6pm-10pm)

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