

WANDERING AND ELOPEMENT POLICY

It is the policy of the Board of Education to require all schools to incorporate wandering and elopement procedures into each school building safety plan.

DEFINITIONS: For purposes of this policy, the following items are defined as indicated.

- A. Elopement: A student intentionally leaving an assigned area without permission from or the knowledge of responsible staff.
- B. Wandering: A student meandering or straying, which leads to leaving a safe environment, intruding into inappropriate places or becoming lost and is often related to a physical or mental distraction.

The procedures required by this policy shall be separate and distinct from students' Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), Behavior Intervention Plans and/or Crisis Management Plans, the consideration and/or review of which shall be required when a student demonstrates wandering and/or elopement behaviors on more than a single occasion within the current or prior school year. For students exhibiting wandering or elopement tendencies, each CSE/CPSE must determine whether the student has behaviors that impede their learning or that of others. This should include consideration of whether the student has a tendency to wander or elope, and if so, to ensure that a functional behavior assessment (FBA) of the behavior is conducted and that it is addressed through proper supervision and an individualized Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) based on the FBA.

In addition, all building-based staff must be provided annual training on the building's wandering and elopement procedures as set forth in the building safety plan prior to the first day that students arrive at school each school year.

Each building's wandering and elopement procedure as set forth in the building safety plan must contain the following components:

1. An explanation of any physical modifications to the building that may discourage wandering and/or elopement, or facilitate notification of staff when an incident occurs, such as door alarms;
2. A protocol for notifying staff, including security staff, custodians, clerical staff and School Resource Officers, of specific students with a history of wandering/elopement (two or more incidents within the current or prior school year), which shall include recent photographs and a description of any triggers that may cause of physical reaction or further flight by the student;
3. Procedures and staff assignments for immediately notifying:
 - a. 911, and
 - b. Parent/Family; and
 - c. Central Officewhen an incident of wandering and/or elopement occurs.

4. Protocols for communicating with responding police, including practices and procedures for accessing and disseminating any available video footage, floor plans, and maps of the school grounds and immediate surrounding areas;
5. A school-wide communication and alert system.
6. Explicit staff assignments for building and ground searches, with a focus on areas of highest threat, such as nearby water and major intersections;
7. A protocol for assuring the availability of recent photos of all students who have a history of wandering or elopement behavior;
8. A protocol for ensuring that students with a history of wandering or elopement incidents carry basic identification at all times, which shall include their name, school, and any triggers that may cause physical reaction or further flight.

General School-Based Practices for Preventing Occurrences of Wandering and/or Elopement:

It is the expectation that all staff will intervene when a student appears to be unsupervised and take appropriate action to ensure that the student is redirected to a supervised activity/location.

School Administrators are expected to strategically and specifically assign staff around the school building during arrival, dismissal, recess, lunch, and transition times in order to minimize the chance of wandering and/or elopement. Such staffing assignments shall be designed in order to account for staff absences, meetings, etc.

Student-specific considerations should be made when determining how much direct supervision a student requires during individual transitions, such as using the restroom, attending a related service, or performing a classroom job.

Cross-ref: 8135 Safe Schools Policy
4202 Students with Disabilities Policy
4209 Student Individualized Education Program: Development and Provision
4210 Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEP)
1400 Code of Conduct
8200 Policy Regarding Deescalation of Crisis Situations

Ref: James P. D. Lorenzo Field Advisory, Health and Safety Precaution for Students with Disabilities NYSED P12 Publications (November 2013)
James P. D. Lorenzo Field Advisory, Health and Safety for Students with Disabilities with Precaution Elopement Behaviors (April 2014)

Note: Adopted September 25, 2018 pursuant to Resolution No. 2018-19: 311; Amended June 24, 2021 pursuant to Resolution No. 2020-21: 930

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