I. PURPOSE:

This policy establishes guidelines for field staff for the identification, assessment, treatment, and protection of youth offenders under OYA supervision in the community that may be at risk for suicide.

II. POLICY DEFINITIONS:

**Self-injurious behavior/self-harm**: Offender engaged in behavior that causes harm and is indicative of an offender not effectively dealing or coping with events or activities. Self-injurious behavior/self harm includes the various methods by which individuals injure themselves, such as self-laceration, self-battering, taking overdoses, or exhibiting deliberate recklessness.

**Substitute care**: Residential placements in the community that provide 24-hour-a-day care and/or treatment, excluding a relative’s home. Such placements include, but are not limited to, foster care, respite care, proctor care, or contracted residential treatment programs.

**Substitute care providers**: Persons authorized by OYA through contract or other written agreement to provide supervision and care for offenders on parole or probation status in the community.
Suicidal behavior: Attempted suicide, suicidal gesture, self-mutilation, intentional injury to self, and/or developing a plan or strategy for committing suicide. Unlike suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior usually involves some overt action or thought by an offender, indicating intent to injure or kill oneself. Suicidal behavior does not include tattooing, body piercing, or gang rituals involving scratching or cutting (scarification).

III. POLICY:

It is the policy of OYA to provide immediate assistance whenever a youth offender demonstrates or is reported to be at risk of suicidal behavior.

This policy establishes procedures for the identification, assessment, treatment, and protection of youth offenders on supervision in the community that may be at risk for suicide.

The contract administrator of any substitute care contract must ensure contracted programs have written procedures describing how the program will respond when a youth offender exhibits self-injurious/self-harm or suicidal behavior. At a minimum, the procedures must identify the warning signs of suicide, emergency protocols and contacts, and staff training.

Foster care certifiers must ensure OYA certified foster care follow the guidelines established in this policy.

IV. GENERAL STANDARDS:

Major depression is the psychiatric diagnosis most commonly associated with suicide. Youth offenders who are depressed and exhibit symptoms are at particular risk for suicide. Symptoms may include, but are not limited to, extreme hopelessness; lack of interest in activities that were previously pleasurable; heightened anxiety or panic attacks; insomnia; talk about suicide or a prior history of attempts; irritability, and agitation.

A. Initial Identification and Intervention Procedures for Youth Offenders in the Community.

1. Any OYA staff member who hears or observes a youth offender verbalize self-injurious/self-harm or suicidal behavior must immediately respond in a manner that protects youth offender safety.

   a) Immediately consult with the field supervisor and the community mental health crisis team for assessment;

   b) Document the incident in a Youth Incident Report (YIR); and

   c) Document all notifications in the YIR (e.g. to the family, Director’s Office).
2. For youth offenders engaged in suicidal behavior, staff must:
   a) Immediately notify local emergency services (911) or law enforcement;
   b) Notify the field supervisor;
   c) Document the incident in a YIR; and
   d) Document all notifications in the YIR (e.g. to local law enforcement; family; Director’s Office).

3. Notification
   a) For youth offenders who have engaged in life-threatening suicidal behavior or who have completed suicide, the staff must immediately report the incident to his/her field supervisor.
   b) The field supervisor must notify the minor youth offender’s parent or guardian. Such notification must be as soon as possible and at least within 24 hours. For youth offenders over the age of 18 or participating in an independent living program or with no family resources, notification of a friend, peer, or program staff may be more appropriate.
   c) The field supervisor must notify the Assistant Director, Community Services, in accordance with OYA policy I-E-1.0 (Director’s Incident Report and Notification).

B. The juvenile parole/probation officer (JPPO) must alert substitute care providers during the referral process when a youth offender has a history of suicidal behavior.

C. Documenting Suicidal Behavior
   1. The JPPO must document all instances of known past and present suicidal behavior exhibited by a youth offender in OYA custody in the JJIS Population Group “OYA *Suicide Documentation” in the “Suicide Behavior” subcategory.
   2. Documenting Suicidal Behavior During OYA Custody

The JPPO must document each incident of suicide behavior exhibited while in OYA custody in the JJIS Population Group “OYA *Suicide Documentation”. A new subcategory of “Suicide Behavior” will be entered for each incident, using the date of the incident as the subcategory start date. Except at case closure, these subcategories will not be closed.
3. **Documenting Suicidal Behavior Prior to OYA Custody**

Documented or self-reported suicidal behavior exhibited prior to OYA custody must also be entered in the JJIS Population Group “OYA *Suicide Documentation” by the JPPO. Each prior incident must be entered as a unique subcategory, using the dates of the incident as the subcategory start date. Except at case closure, these subcategories will not be closed.

4. The field supervisor or designee is responsible for ensuring this documentation is entered for youth offenders in the community.

**D. Training**

The Juvenile Justice Training Academy (Training Academy) must have initial suicide prevention training and annual updates available for substitute care providers. Training must include, at a minimum, information on the symptoms of depression, the warning signs of suicide, intervention techniques, and emergency protocols.

**V. OYA GENERAL FIELD PROCEDURE REQUIRED: YES**

The general procedures designate staff responsibilities concerning

A. Staff training;

B. Intake documentation and review; and

C. Community placement.

**VI. LOCAL OPERATING PROTOCOL REQUIRED: NO**