

SUICIDE PREVENTION

The County Board of Education recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, and school personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate referral and/or assistance. In an effort to reduce suicidal behavior, its impact on students and families, and other trauma associated with suicide, the County Board shall incorporate any measures, strategies, practices, and supports developed by the County Superintendent of Schools for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in county office of education (COE) schools.

Developing and updating policies and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention shall include consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, and, for the policy for students in grades K-6, coordination with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

Consultation with school and community stakeholders may include COE and school administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, other staff, parents/guardians and caregivers, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, community organizations, law enforcement, legal counsel, and/or the COE's risk manager or insurance carrier.

When developing or reviewing COE policy on suicide prevention, consideration may be made regarding the need to hire a mental health professional for the COE or for any school that is not currently served by one.

Measures and strategies may include:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention offered by the County Superintendent for teachers, school counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, expanded day learning staff, tutors, and volunteers
2. Instruction to secondary students in problem-solving and coping skills to promote students' mental, emotional, and social health and well-being, as well as instruction in recognizing and appropriately responding to warning signs of suicidal intent in others
3. Methods for promoting a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and that is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students

(cf. 5131.2 - Bullying)

(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)

(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)

4. The review of materials and resources used in awareness efforts and communications to ensure they align with best practices for safe and effective messaging about suicide
5. The provision of information to parents/guardians regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the suicide problem among youth, the COE's suicide prevention curriculum, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis
6. Encouragement for students to notify appropriate school personnel or other adults when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions
7. Crisis intervention procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts which include, but are not limited to, the following actions:
 - a. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary
 - b. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
 - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene
 - d. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible
8. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide
9. Establishment by the County Superintendent of COE and/or school-site crisis intervention team(s) to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other local practices related to the emotional and behavioral wellness of students, including, but not limited to, the oversight of mental health and suicide prevention training, ensuring the suicide prevention policy, protocols, and resources are posted on the COE and school websites, collaboration with community mental health organizations, identification of resources and organizations that provide evidence-based treatment, collaboration to build community response, and compliance with Education Code 215

As appropriate, these measures and strategies shall specifically address the needs of students who are at high risk of suicide, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide; students with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; students who are experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth. (Education Code 215)

As appropriate, trauma-informed crisis management procedures may be developed to address student mental health disabilities. In accordance with law, such procedures may include an individualized assessment of a student's circumstances; provide and facilitate access to mental

health evaluations and services; reasonably modify policies, such as attendance policies, for individual students; and train staff to recognize and respond appropriately to signs of distress and suicidal ideation in students. The measures and strategies may also address the needs of students with individual risk factors such as previous suicide attempt(s) or self-harm, history of depression or mental illness, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe or traumatic stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors.

As may be determined by the County Superintendent, processes may be established for maintaining regular contact between school staff and students, including during school closures.

Measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 shall be age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. (Education Code 215)

Student identification cards for students in grades 7-12, when issued by the County Superintendent, shall include the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line, campus police or security, a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number, and/or a quick response (QR) code for the county's mental health resources website. (Education Code 215.5)

The name, title, and contact information of the members of the COE and/or school site crisis intervention team(s) shall be provided to students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers and posted on school and COE websites. Such notifications shall identify the mental health professional who serves as the crisis intervention team's designated reporter to receive and act upon reports of a student's suicidal intention.

Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, principal, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. The County Board encourages any staff member who suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm to promptly notify the principal or school counselor, who shall implement COE intervention protocols as appropriate.

If a referral is made for mental health or related services for a student in grade K-6 who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, the COE shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

Mental or behavioral health services for students in need shall be provided in accordance with protocols established by the County Superintendent.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging employees to act outside of the authorization or scope of their credential or to diagnose or treat mental illness unless specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

School employees shall act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. An employee is not authorized to diagnose or treat mental illness unless specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

The County Board shall review, and update as necessary, this policy at least every five years. The County Board may, at its discretion, review the policy more frequently. (Education Code 215)

COE data pertaining to school climate and reports of suicidal ideation, attempts, or death shall be periodically reviewed to identify patterns or trends and make recommendations regarding program development.

This policy shall be posted in a prominent location on the COE's website in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

215 Student suicide prevention policies

215.5 Suicide prevention hotline contact information on student identification cards

216 Suicide prevention online training programs

32280-32289 Comprehensive safety plan

49060-49079 Student records

49602 Confidentiality of student information

49604 Suicide prevention training for school counselors

GOVERNMENT CODE

810-996.6 Government Claims Act

PENAL CODE

11164-11174.3 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act

WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE

5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent

5850-5883 Children's Mental Health Services Act

COURT DECISIONS

Corales v. Bennett (Ontario-Montclair School District), (2009) 567 F.3d 554

Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS

School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PUBLICATIONS

Preventing Suicide: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, 2015

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, rev. 2012

Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, 2012

WEB SITES

American Association of Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org>

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>

American School Counselor Association: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org>

California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>

California Department of Health Care Services, Suicide Prevention Program:
<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/SuicidePrevention.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>

National Association of School Psychologists: <https://www.nasponline.org>

National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Trevor Project: <http://thetrevorproject.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>