

Suicide Prevention

The Board of Trustees recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent or designee shall develop preventive strategies and intervention procedures.

The Superintendent, Behavioral Health Manager or designee may involve school health professionals, school counselors, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies and professionals, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the district's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

Prevention and Instruction

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

The district's comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-esteem. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum in the secondary grades. Such instruction shall be aligned with state content standards and shall be designed to help students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

The Superintendent, Behavioral Health Manager or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

Staff Development

Staff development may include training about risk factors associated with suicide, as provided in item #1 below. Information about research on risk factors is available in the CDE's Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools as well as through the California Department of Mental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Association of Suicidology, and other health organizations.

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be designed to help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training shall be offered under the direction of the district's Behavioral Health Manager in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior
3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health

4. School and community resources and services

5. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide

Intervention

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the principal, behavioral health manager or school counselor. The principal behavioral health manager or school counselor shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible and may refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community.

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.

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall complete the suicide prevention curriculum, including identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

The Superintendent in consultation with the behavioral health manager shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications in the event that a suicide occurs or an attempt is made on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

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

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

The Superintendent or designee shall periodically review district data pertaining to school climate and reports of suicidal ideation, attempts, or death to identify patterns or trends and make recommendations regarding program development.

The Superintendent or designee shall post this policy on the district's web site, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

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

WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE

5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent

5850-5883 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

Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools, 2005

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003 CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH PUBLICATIONS

California Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention: Every Californian is Part of the Solution, 2008 CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS

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

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001

WEB SITES

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

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

California Department of Mental Health, Children and Youth Programs:
http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services_and_Programs/Children_and_Youth

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

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

Policy EMERY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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