

## Students

BP 5141.52 (a)

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Board of Education recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that 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 attempt* to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent or designee shall develop measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing measures and strategies for *suicide prevention and intervention*, ~~use by the district,~~ the Superintendent or designee ~~may~~ shall consult with school *and community stakeholders such as administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, and students; school-employed mental health professionals such as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses; suicide prevention experts such as* ~~health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students,~~ local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations; *law enforcement; and, in developing policy for grades K-6, the county mental health plan (Education Code 215)*

*(cf. 1020 – Youth Services)*

*(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)*

*(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)*

*The Board shall ensure that measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 are age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. (Education Code 215)*

*Measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention* ~~Such measures and strategies~~ shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, school counselors, and other District employees who interact with students, *as described in the accompanying administrative regulation* ~~in elementary/secondary grades~~

*(cf. 4131/4231/4331 – Staff Development)*

2. Instruction to 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

*(cf. 6142.8 – Comprehensive Health Education)*

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

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**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

*(cf. 5131 - Conduct)*

*(cf. 5131.2 – Bullying)*

*(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)*

*(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)*

4. The provision of information to parents/guardians regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the *suicide problem among* youth ~~suicide problem~~, the District's suicide prevention curriculum, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis
5. 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
6. Crisis intervention procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts
7. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide

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)

*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 Superintendent or designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)*

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*

*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. (Education Code 215)*

*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)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)***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**234.6 Posting suicide prevention policy on website**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 Mental Health Services Act*COURT DECISIONS*Corales v. Bennett (Ontario-Montclair School District), (2009) 567 F.3d 554**Management Resources:*CDE 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-**2003-*  
*Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2019*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**National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001-*WEB SITES*American Association of Sociology: <http://www.suicideology.org>**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <http://afsp.org>**American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>**American School Counselor Association: <http://www.apa.org>**California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>**California Department of Health Care Services, Mental Health Services: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH>**California Department of Health Care Services, Suicide Prevention Program:-**<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages?suicide-Prevention.aspx>**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>**National Association of School Psychologists: <http://www.nasponline.org>**National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>**Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <http://www.sprc.org/about-suicide>**Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>*

*Policy amended: May 29, 2020*  
Policy amended: June 14, 2018  
Policy amended: October 16, 2014  
Policy adopted: March 19, 2009

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

### Staff Development

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, counselors, and other District employees who interact with students at the ~~secondary~~ level. The training shall be offered under the direction of a District counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies.

*(cf. 4131/4231/4331 – Staff Development)*

Materials for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services at the school site and within the community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. Materials also may include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials. (Education Code 215)

Staff development shall include research and information related to the following topics:

1. The higher risk of suicide among certain groups, including, but not limited to, students who are *impacted* 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
2. 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 stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors

*(cf. 5131.6 – Alcohol and Other Drugs)*

3. Warning signs that may indicate depression, emotional distress, or suicidal intentions, such as changes in students' personality or behavior and verbalizations of hopelessness or suicidal intent
4. Protective factors that may help to decrease a person's suicide risk, such as resiliency, problem-solving ability, access to mental health care, and positive connections to family, peers, school, and community
5. Instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health
6. School and community resource and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

(cf. 5141.6 – School Health Services  
 (cf. 6164.2 – Guidance/Counseling Services)

7. *Appropriate ways to interact with a student who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal and District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide, including, but not limited to, appropriate protocols for monitoring the student while the immediate referral of the student to medical or mental health services is being processed*
8. *District procedures for responding after a suicide has occurred*

**Instruction**

The District's comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students and shall be aligned with the state content standards and curriculum framework. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum at ~~appropriate secondary grades and shall be~~ *in an appropriate manner* designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide
2. Develop coping and resiliency skills and self-esteem
3. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent
4. Identify trusted adults, school resources, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention services

~~(cf. 1020 – Youth Services)~~  
 (cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)  
 (cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)  
 (cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)  
 (cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

***Student Identification Cards***

*Student identification cards for students in grades 7-12 shall include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line and/or a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number. (Education Code 215.5)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)****Intervention**

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. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm, *the staff member* he/she shall promptly notify the principal or school counselor, *who shall implement district intervention protocols as appropriate.*

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with third parties, the counselor may report to the principal or student's parent/guardians when *there is* he/she has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure is necessary to avert a clear and present danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the student *or others within the school community.* In addition, the counselor may disclose information of a personal nature to psychotherapists, other health care providers, or the school nurse for the sole purpose of referring the student for treatment. (Education Code 49602)

*(cf. 5141 – Health Care and Emergencies)*

~~A school employee shall act only within the authorization and scope of his/her credential or license. An employee is not authorized to diagnose or treat mental illness unless he/she is specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)~~

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall receive training that includes identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

*(cf. 5138 – Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)*

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the principal or designee shall ensure student safety by taking the following actions:

1. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services in necessary
2. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
3. 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

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4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible

*(cf. 0450 – Comprehensive Safety Plan)  
(cf. 5141 – Health Care and Emergencies)*

The principal or designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.

*(cf. 5125 – Student Records)*

The Superintendent or designee shall follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed. If the parent/guardian does not access treatment for the student, the Superintendent or designee may meet with the parent/guardian to identify barriers to treatment and assist the family in providing follow-up care for the student. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Superintendent or designee shall consider whether he/she is required, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.

*(cf. 5141.4 – Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting)*

For any student returning to school after a mental health crisis, the principal or designee and/or school counselor may meet with the parents/guardians and, if appropriate, with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school *and determine the need for ongoing support.*

**Postvention**

In the event that a student dies by suicide, the Superintendent or designee shall communicate with the student's parents/guardians to offer condolences, assistance, and resources. In accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with the parent/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

The Superintendent or designee shall implement procedures to address students' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. ~~He/she~~ *The Superintendent or designee* shall provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. *Students significantly affected by suicide death and those at risk of imitative behavior should be identified and closely monitored.* School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the district-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. The District's response shall not sensationalize

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suicide and shall focus on the District's postvention plan and available resources.

*(cf. 1112 – Media Relations)*

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the Superintendent or designee shall provide an opportunity for all staff who responded to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

*Regulation amended: May 29, 2020*

Regulations amended: June 14, 2018

Regulation amended: October 16, 2014

Regulation approved: June 7, 2001