

## **SUICIDE PREVENTION**

**BP 5141.52**

### **STUDENTS**

The Governing Board 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 Superintendent/designee shall develop measures, strategies, practices, and supports for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing policy and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, the Superintendent/designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, and, in developing policy for grades K-6, the county mental health plan. (EC 215)

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

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, interns, school counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, coaches, expanded day learning staff, crossing guards, tutors, and volunteers
2. Instruction to students in problem-solving, coping, and resiliency 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
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 and caregivers regarding risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, the severity of the suicide problem among youth, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, the district's suicide prevention policy and procedures, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, the importance of communicating with appropriate staff if suicide risk is present or suspected, access to suicide prevention training, 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

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8. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide
9. Establishment of district and/or school-site crisis intervention team/s to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other district practices related to the emotional and behavioral wellness of students, including, but not limited to, the oversight of mental health and suicide prevention training, 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. (EC 215)

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. (EC 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/designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (EC 215)

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. (EC 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. (EC 215)

The Superintendent/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/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. (EC 234.6)

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### State References

EC 215 Student suicide prevention policies  
EC 215.5 Student identification cards, inclusion of safety hotlines  
EC 216 Suicide prevention online training programs  
EC 234.6 Bullying and harassment prevention information  
EC 32280-32289.5 Comprehensive safety plan  
EC 49060-49079 Student records  
EC 49602 Confidentiality of personal information received during counseling  
EC 49604 Suicide prevention training for school counselors  
GC 810-996.6 California Tort Claims Act  
PC 11164-11174.3 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act  
WIC 5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent  
WIC 5850-5886 Children's Mental Health Services Act  
Management Resources  
CDE Pub-01-05 Guide for Pilot Txt/Instr Mat, r 1/15  
CDC Pub-School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009  
Court Decision-AM v Albertsons, LLC, (2009) Cal.App.4th 455  
Natl Assoc Sch Psych Pub-Prevent Suicide: Guide Admin/Crisis Teams, 2015  
US Dept Hlth Human Svcs Pub-Natl Strat Suicide Prev: Goals/Obj for Action  
AASA The School Superintendents Association website

### Cross References

0450 Comprehensive Safety Plan  
470 COVID-19 Mitigation Plan  
400 Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and The Schools  
515 Campus Security  
131 Staff Development  
125 Student Records  
131 Conduct  
5131.2 Bullying  
5131.6 Alcohol and Other Drugs  
5131.8 Mobile Communication Devices  
137 Positive School Climate  
138 Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation  
141 Health Care and Emergencies  
5141.4 Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting  
5141.6 School Health Services  
142 Safety  
5145.3 Nondiscrimination/Harassment  
5145.7 Sexual Harassment  
5145.9 Hate-Motivated Behavior  
6142.8 Comprehensive Health Education  
6164.2 Guidance/Counseling Services

(12/18 3/20) 6/21

Date Adopted: June 13, 2017

Date Revised: October 16, 2019; August 12, 2020, August 11, 2021

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**STUDENTS**

**Staff Development**

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, interns, counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, coaches, expanded day learning staff, crossing guards, tutors, and volunteers. The training shall be offered under the direction of a district counselor, psychologist, and/or social worker who has received advanced training specific to suicide and who may collaborate with one or more county or community mental health agencies.

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. (EC 215)

Additionally, 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 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
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 or traumatic stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors
3. Identification of students who may be at risk of suicide, including, but not limited to, 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 student'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, promoting mental and emotional health, reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, and using safe and effective messaging about suicide
6. The importance of early prevention and intervention in reducing the risk of suicide
7. School and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups
8. Appropriate ways to interact with a student who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal and procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide, including, but not limited to, appropriate protocols for constant monitoring and supervision of the student, during the time the student is in the school's physical custody, while the immediate referral of the student to medical or mental health services is being processed

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9. District procedures for responding after a suicide has occurred

10. Common misconceptions about suicide

The district may provide additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention to district mental health professionals, including, but not limited to, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses.

**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 in an age and developmentally appropriate manner and shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide, including, but not limited to, understanding how mental health challenges and emotional distress, such as feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety, can lead to thoughts of suicide
2. Develop coping and resiliency skills for dealing with stress and trauma, and building 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, including the district's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures; and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help
5. Develop help-seeking strategies and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking services for mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention
6. Recognize that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide

The Superintendent/designee may develop and implement school activities that raise awareness about mental health wellness and suicide prevention.

**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. (EC 215.5)

**Intervention**

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

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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 shall promptly notify the principal, school counselor, or designated reporter, 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, discussed, or referred to with third parties, the counselor may report to the principal or student's parents/guardians when there is 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, or to report child abuse and neglect as required by Penal Code 11164-11174.3. (EC 49602)

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.

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 as 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 and providing comfort to the student until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene
4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible
5. 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.
6. 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 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/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/designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

The Superintendent/designee shall implement procedures to address students' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. The Superintendent/designee shall provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed.

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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 to best 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 suicide and shall focus on the district's postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the Superintendent/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.

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W&I Code 5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent  
W&I Code 5850-5886 Children's Mental Health Services Act

**Management Resources**

CDE Pub 01-05 Guide Pilot Texts/Instr Mat, r. 1/15  
CDC Pub Sch Connect: Strat Incr Prot Factors Am Youth, 2009  
Court Dec. AM v. Albertsons, LLC, (2009) Cal.App.4th 455  
Natl Assoc Sch Psy Prev Suic:Guid Adm/Crisis Teams, 2015  
US DHHS Pub Natl Strat Suic Prev: Goals/Obj Action, r 2012  
Website: AASA The School Superintendents Association

**Cross References**

0450 Comprehensive Safety Plan  
0470 COVID-19 Mitigation Plan  
1400 Rel Betwn Oth Govt Agencies and Schools  
3515 Campus Security  
4131, 4231, 4331 Staff Development  
5125 Student Records  
5131 Conduct  
5131.2 Bullying  
5131.6 Alcohol And Other Drugs  
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