

## **Suicide Prevention**

The Governing Board 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 purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all district students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide.

The district:

- a. Recognizes that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes,
- b. Further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people,
- c. Has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide, and
- d. Acknowledges the school's role in providing an environment that is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development. Those deemed at high-risk for suicide include, but are not limited to:
  - \* Youth bereaved by suicide.
  - \* Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
  - \* Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.
  - \* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth.

Towards this end, the policy is meant to be paired with other policies supporting the emotional and behavioral health of students more broadly. Specifically, this policy is meant to be applied in accordance with the district's child find obligations, Wellness policies, School safety: Safe Place to Learn Act, Non-discrimination policies, and other pertinent Board policies.

The Superintendent or designee may involve school health professionals, school counselors, administrators, school psychologists, 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.

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)

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

### 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.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)

(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)

(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)

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.

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

The Superintendent or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information that 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

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 a district counselor/psychologist and/or 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

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

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

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

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

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)

#### Intervention

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the principal or school counselor. The principal or 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.

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

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.

(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)

The Superintendent or designee 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.

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>

Policy ELK GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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