

Students
SUICIDE PREVENTION

BP 5141.52 (a)

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, that prevention is a collective effort that requires engagement by all members of the district and school community, 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 reduce suicidal behavior, its impact on students and families, and other associated trauma, the Superintendent or designee shall develop measures, strategies, practices and supports for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing and updating district policy and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. If the policy will affect TK-6 students, the county mental health plan shall also be consulted. (Education Code 215).

School and community stakeholders and school mental health professionals with whom the Superintendent or designee shall consult may include district 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 district's risk manager or insurance carrier. The Superintendent or designee may also collaborate with county and/or city governments in an effort to align district policy with any existing community suicide prevention plans.

When developing or reviewing district policy on suicide prevention, the Superintendent or designee may make a recommendation regarding the need to hire a mental health professional for the district, or for any school that is not currently served by a mental health professional, and the possible funding source(s) for such hiring.

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; help-seeking strategies and resources; and 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 relationships among students

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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 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
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 exceptional needs, 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. (Education Code 215)

In order to address mental health disabilities, the district may, as appropriate and in accordance with law, develop trauma-informed crisis management procedures that include an individualized assessment of the 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.

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The Superintendent or designee shall establish a process for school staff to maintain daily or regular contact with all students, including during distance learning and school closures, and for such staff to communicate any concerns about a student's emotional wellbeing and/or safety to the appropriate authorities.

Additionally, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure that school-based mental health professionals maintain regular contact with high-risk students, students who are on their caseloads, and those who are identified by staff as demonstrating need

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)

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)

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)

State

Ed. Code 215: Suicide prevention policies

Ed. Code 215.5: Student identification cards; inclusion of safety hotlines

Ed. Code 216: Suicide prevention online training programs

Ed. Code 218.3: Training curriculum to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning students

Ed. Code 234.6: Bullying and harassment prevention information

Ed. Code 32280-32289.5: School safety plans

Ed. Code 49060-49079: Student records

Ed. Code 49428.15: Identification of evidence-based and evidence-informed training programs for schools to address youth behavioral health

Ed. Code 49428.2: Referral protocols for addressing student behavioral health concerns in grades 7-12; certification of youth behavioral health training for employees

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Ed. Code 49428.5: Student mental health poster
Ed. Code 49429: Telehealth technology in schools
Ed. Code 49602: Counseling and confidentiality of student information
Ed. Code 49604: Suicide prevention training for school counselors
Gov. Code 810-996.6: Government Claims Act
Pen. Code 11164-11174.3: Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act
W&I Code 5698: System of care for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance
W&I Code 5850-5886: Children's Mental Health Services Act

Federal

42 USC 290bb-33: Suicide Training and Awareness Nationally Delivered for Universal Prevention Act of 2021

Management Resources

California Department of Education Publication: Telehealth Guidance for School Districts, July 2024
California Department of Education Publication: Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy for Local Educational Agencies that Serve Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade Students, February 2023
California Department of Education Publication: Health Education Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, May 2019
California Department of Education Publication: Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008
CDC and Prevention Publication: School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009
CDC Publication: Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools, December 2023
Court Decision: Corales v. Bennett (Ontario-Montclair School District) (2009) 567 F.3d 554
CSBA Publication: Safe Schools Toolkit: Bullying and Cyberbullying, July 2024
Each Mind Matters Publication: Making Headlines: Guide to Engaging the Media in Suicide Prevention in California, 2012
Heard Alliance Publication: K-12 Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention, 2021
Mental Health Svcs Oversight & Accountability Pub: Accelerating Transformational Change: Strategic Plan for 2024-2027
Mental Health Svcs Oversight & Accountability Pub: Striving for Zero: California's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020-2025
Nat'l Assoc. of School Psychologists Publication: Preventing Suicide: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, 2015
Nat's Assoc. of School Psychologists Publication: Conducting a Virtual Suicide Assessment Checklist
Nat's Assoc. of School Psychologists Publication: Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention in a Time of Distance Learning, 2020
Suicide Prevention Resource Center Publication: After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, 2nd Edition, 2018
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services Publication: Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, 2012
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services Publication: National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, 2021
USDOE Ofc for Civil Rights, USDOJ Civil Rights Pub: Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Students at Risk of Self-Harm in the Era of COVID-19, October 2021
Website: SchoolSafety.gov
Website: California Department of Public Health, Office of Suicide Prevention
Website: Mental Health Evaluation, Training, Research, and Innovation Center for Schools (METRICS)
Website: CalHOPE Schools Initiative
Website: California Surgeon General, Safe Spaces: Trauma-Informed Training
Website: CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services
Website: Suicide Prevention Messaging
Website: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Website: Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
Website: HEARD Alliance
Website: Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement
Website: Crisis Text Line

Website: California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys (CalSCHLS)

Website: California Mental Health Services Authority

Website: Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Website: Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Website: National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Website: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Website: Trevor Project

Website: American Academy of Pediatrics

Website: American Association of Suicidology

Website: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Website: American Psychological Association

Website: California Department of Education, Mental Health

Website: California Department of Health Care Services, Mental Health Services

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health

Website: National Association of School Psychologists

Website: National Institute for Mental Health

Website: American School Counselor Association

Policy Adopted: 5/14/25

ORCUTT UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Orcutt, California