

Policy 5141.52: Suicide Prevention

Status: ADOPTED

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The Governing Board 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. 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 policy and strategies for suicide prevention and intervention, the Superintendent or designee 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 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)

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, school counselors, and other district employees who interact with students, as described in the accompanying administrative regulation
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
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 provision of information to parents/guardians regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the 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)

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 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)
