

Policy 5141.52: Suicide Prevention

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 07/01/2009 | **Last Revised Date:** 03/01/2025

Updated: 08/20/2025

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, that prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, 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 K-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
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 protocols 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, ensuring the suicide prevention policy, protocols, and resources are posted on the district and school websites, 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.

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 suicide prevention 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)

When the district determines that a student is in need of mental or behavioral health services, the services shall be provided in accordance with protocols specified in Board Policy 5141.5 - Mental Health.

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 website, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

Policy Reference Disclaimer:

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State	Description
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
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	Description
42 USC 290bb-33	Suicide Training and Awareness Nationally Delivered for Universal Prevention Act of 2021
Management Resources	Description
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
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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
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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	<u>CalHOPE Schools Initiative</u>
Website	<u>California Surgeon General, Safe Spaces: Trauma-Informed Training</u>
Website	<u>CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services</u>
Website	<u>Suicide Prevention Messaging</u>
Website	<u>National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention</u>
Website	<u>Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission</u>
Website	<u>HEARD Alliance</u>
Website	<u>Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement</u>
Website	<u>Crisis Text Line</u>
Website	<u>California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys (CalSCHLS)</u>
Website	<u>California Mental Health Services Authority</u>
Website	<u>Suicide Prevention Lifeline</u>
Website	<u>Suicide Prevention Resource Center</u>
Website	<u>National Child Traumatic Stress Network</u>
Website	<u>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</u>
Website	<u>Trevor Project</u>
Website	<u>American Academy of Pediatrics</u>
Website	<u>American Association of Suicidology</u>
Website	<u>American Foundation for Suicide Prevention</u>
Website	<u>American Psychological Association</u>
Website	<u>California Department of Education, Mental Health</u>
Website	<u>California Department of Health Care Services, Mental Health Services</u>
Website	<u>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health</u>
Website	<u>National Association of School Psychologists</u>
Website	<u>National Institute for Mental Health</u>
Website	<u>American School Counselor Association</u>

Cross References

Code	Description
0450	Comprehensive Safety Plan
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1112	Media Relations
1220	Citizen Advisory Committees
1220	Citizen Advisory Committees
1240	Volunteer Assistance
1240	Volunteer Assistance
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3515	Campus Security
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4112.21	Interns
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5131.8	Mobile Communication Devices
5137	Positive School Climate
5138	Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation
5141	Health Care And Emergencies
5141	Health Care And Emergencies
5141.22	Infectious Diseases
5141.22	Infectious Diseases
5141.4	Child Abuse Prevention And Reporting
5141.4	Child Abuse Prevention And Reporting
5141.5	Mental Health
5141.6	School Health Services
5141.6	School Health Services
5142	Safety
5142	Safety
5145.3	Nondiscrimination/Harassment
5145.3	Nondiscrimination/Harassment
5145.7	Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment
5145.7	Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment
5145.71	Title IX Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment Complaint Procedures
5145.71	Title IX Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment Complaint Procedures
5145.9	Hate-Motivated Behavior
5148	Child Care And Development
5148	Child Care And Development
5148.2	Before/After School Programs
5148.2	Before/After School Programs
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6142.8	Comprehensive Health Education
6145.2	Athletic Competition

6145.2	Athletic Competition
6145.8	Assemblies And Special Events
6164.2	Guidance/Counseling Services
6164.5	Student Success Teams
6164.5	Student Success Teams

MOUNTAIN UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Status: ADOPTED

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Updated: 08/20/2025

Definitions

Mental health professional means an individual licensed or registered, or an intern or associate working towards licensure, by the Board of Behavioral Sciences or the Board of Psychology in the Department of Consumer Affairs. (Education Code 215)

Student suicide crisis means any of the following: (Education Code 215)

1. A student who is exhibiting suicidal thoughts or behaviors
2. A student who has completed a suicide risk assessment and is determined to be at risk of suicide
3. A student who is attempting to physically harm themselves or others

School mental health professional means a school employee with a clear or preliminary pupil personnel services credential with a specialization in school counseling, school social work, or school psychology, a credentialed school nurse, or a licensed, registered, or associate marriage and family therapist, professional clinical counselor, clinical social worker, educational psychologist, or psychologist under the supervision of a school employee with a pupil personnel services or administrative services credential. (Education Code 215)

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 families to those services. Training materials may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials. (Education Code 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 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
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
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 or 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 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line, campus police or security, a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number, and/or a quick response (QR) code for the county's mental health resources website. (Education Code 215.5)

Intervention

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the name, title, and contact information of the members of the district and/or school crisis intervention team(s) to students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers and post on school and district websites. Such notifications shall identify the mental health professional who serves as the crisis intervention team's designated reporter to receive and act upon reports of a student's suicidal intention.

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.

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. (Education Code 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 the district determines that a student is in need of mental or behavioral health services, the services shall be provided in accordance with protocols specified in Board Policy 5141.5 - Mental Health.

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

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.

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 it is necessary, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.

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 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 parents/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. 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 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 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.

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State

Ed. Code 215

Ed. Code 215.5

Description

[Suicide prevention policies](#)

[Student identification cards: inclusion of safety hotlines](#)

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