

Chico Unified School District

Behavioral and Mental Health Referral Policy

In accordance with Board Policy 5141.5, Chico Unified School District hereby adopts the following policy on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns in grades 7–12. This policy has been developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders and school-linked behavioral health professionals and establishes the adopted procedures relating to referrals to behavioral health professionals and support services.

Addressing the Needs of High-Risk Groups (EC Section 49428.2(b)(3))

Chico Unified recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to behavioral health supports for all students and hereby adopts this policy to address the needs of high-risk student groups, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Students with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
- Foster youth and youth placed in out-of-home settings.
- Homeless youth.
- Students experiencing bereavement or loss of a close family member or friend.
- Students for whom there is a concern due to behavioral health disorders, including common psychiatric conditions and substance use disorders such as opioid and alcohol abuse.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning pupils.

District staff work in collaboration with Special Education providers, Foster Youth Liaison, Homeless Liaison, and school site administrators to oversee the mental and behavioral health needs of students and ensure referral protocols are followed for all students.

District leadership continuously monitors all student groups, including but not limited to, English learners or recently immigrated students, to ensure services are provided in the event of increased behavioral health risks.

Student Privacy

Chico Unified recognizes and agrees to abide by the variety of federal and state student data privacy laws and regulations (including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA], EC Section 49073, et seq., etc.) with which Chico Unified must comply in connection with its policy on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns and in connection with implementation of its policy and

protocols, including but not limited to any of subsets of its policy, such as those listed below.

Referral Protocols and Procedures

The District utilizes the following referral protocols and procedures relating to referrals to behavioral health professionals and support services:

Needs Assessment

- Educational Services Division shall conduct an annual needs assessment to:
 - Identify behavioral health trends;
 - Review available resources; and
 - Detect service gaps within the school community.
- Each school site shall review referral volume, response times, and outcomes on a quarterly basis and shall submit findings to the Educational Services Office for continuous improvement.

Capacity Building

- Chico Unified shall:
 - Provide professional development on referral pathways and staff roles;
 - Clarify responsibilities among certificated and classified staff; and
 - Maintain partnerships with school-linked behavioral health professionals and community providers

Planning

- Each school site shall:
 - Define referral pathways for crisis and non-crisis concerns;
 - Establish goals and assign responsible roles for each step in the referral process;

Implementation

- Chico Unified shall ensure school sites establish step-by-step procedures to:
 - Initiate referrals;
 - Document concerns;
 - Notify parents/guardians consistent with law;
 - Triage level of need;
 - Link students to appropriate services; and
 - Schedule follow-up checks, as needed.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

- The Educational Services Division shall conduct an annual evaluation of referral protocols that includes:
 - Data collection and analysis;
 - Input from staff, families, and community stakeholders; and
 - Recommended, targeted improvements based on results.
- Evaluations will monitor outcomes, such as:
 - Median time to first contact;
 - Percentage of follow-ups completed within ten school days;
 - Referral closure rates; and
 - Results for the pupil groups identified in *EC* Section 49428.2(b)(3).
- A summary of results will be reported to the Governing Board annually to support transparency and continuous improvement.

Training (*EC* Section 49428.2(b)(4), (c)-(e))

Chico Unified shall ensure that teachers of pupils in grades 7–12 receive training on youth behavioral health. Training materials approved by the District shall include:

- How to identify appropriate contacts for behavioral health evaluation, services, or both evaluation and services, at both the school site and within the larger community; and
- When and how to refer pupils and their families to those services.
- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of youth behavioral health disorders.

Chico Unified shall certify, on or before July 1, 2029, to the California Department Education that 100 percent of its certificated employees and 40 percent of its classified employees who have direct contact with pupils in grades 7–12 have received youth behavioral health training at least once, in accordance with *EC* Section 49428.2(c)(1)–(5).

Authorization and Scope of Practice (*EC* Section 49428.2(b)(5))

In order to ensure that all school employees act only within the authorization or scope of their credential or license, the District shall:

- Provide training and guidance to staff clarifying their roles in the referral process and the limits of their credential or license.

- Direct employees to refer pupils to appropriately credentialed or licensed professionals when behavioral health concerns are identified.
- Maintain referral protocols that specify which staff positions are authorized to act at each stage of the referral process.
- Review job descriptions and assignments to confirm they align with credentialing and licensing requirements.
- Inform staff clearly that only licensed or credentialed professionals are permitted to diagnose or treat behavioral health conditions.

Consistent with *EC* sections 49428.1(b)(8) and 49428.2(b)(5), nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging school employees to diagnose or treat youth behavioral health disorders unless they are specifically licensed and employed to do so.