

**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

The County Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, and 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 trauma associated with suicide, the County Superintendent or designee will develop measures strategies, practices, and supports for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention for LACOE schools.

In developing policy and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, the County Superintendent or designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders school-employed mental health professionals and suicide prevention experts.

Consultation with school and community stakeholders may include LACOE and school mental health professionals including 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 LACOE's risk manager or insurance carrier. The County Superintendent or designee may also collaborate with county and/or city governments in an effort to align LACOE policy with any existing community suicide prevention plans.

Measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention may 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, tutors, and volunteers.

*(cf. 1240 - Volunteer Assistance)*

*(cf. 4112.21 - Interns)*

*(cf. 4121 - Temporary/Substitute Personnel)*

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 5142 - Safety)*

2. Age and developmentally -appropriate instruction to students in problem-solving, coping, and resiliency 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

*(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

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

*(cf. 5131 - Conduct)*

*(cf. 5131.2 - Bullying)*

*(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)*

*(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.71 - Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedures)*

*(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)*

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 that describes risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, the severity of the suicide problem among youth, LACOE's suicide prevention curriculum, 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 which include, but are not limited to, the following actions:
  - a. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary
  - b. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
  - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene
  - d. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible
8. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

9. Establishment of LACOE and/or school-site crisis intervention team(s) to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other LACOE 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

*(cf. 5141.5 - Mental Health)*

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. (Education Code 215)

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.

Student identification cards for students in grades 7-12 shall include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line and/or a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number. (Education Code 215.5)

The name, title, and contact information of the members of LACOE and/or school site crisis intervention team(s) shall be provided to students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers and on school and LACOE web sites. 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.

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. Any staff member who suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm is encouraged to promptly notify the principal, or school counselor, or designated reporter, who shall implement LACOE intervention protocols as appropriate.

LACOE 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 LACOE employees to diagnose or treat mental illness unless they are specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

The County Board shall review, and update as necessary, this policy at least every five years. The County Board may, at its discretion, review the policy more frequently. (Education Code 215)

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

The County Superintendent or designee shall periodically review LACOE 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 County Superintendent or designee shall post this policy on the LACOE website in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

*Legal references (see next page)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

*Legal Reference:*

*EDUCATION CODE*

*215 Student suicide prevention policies*

*215.5 Suicide prevention hotline contact information on student identification cards*

*216 Suicide prevention online training programs*

*234.6 Posting suicide prevention policy on web site*

*32280-32289.5 Comprehensive safety plan*

*49060-49079 Student records*

*49602 Counseling; confidentiality of student information*

*49604 Suicide prevention training for school counselors*

*GOVERNMENT CODE*

*810-996.6 Government Claims Act*

*PENAL CODE*

*11164-11174.3 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act*

*WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE*

*5698 Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent*

*5850-5886 Children's 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 Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2019*

*Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008*

*Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy*

*CALSCHLS PUBLICATIONS*

*California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)*

*California School Parent Survey (CSPS)*

*California School Staff Survey (CSSS)*

*CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS*

*School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009*

*EACH MIND MATTERS: CALIFORNIA'S MENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT PUBLICATIONS*

*Making Headlines: Guide to Engaging the Media in Suicide Prevention in California, 2012*

*HEARD ALLIANCE PUBLICATIONS*

*K-12 Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention, 2017*

*MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATIONS*

*Striving for Zero: California's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020-2025*

*NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PUBLICATIONS*

*Preventing Suicide, Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, 2015*

*SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE CENTER PUBLICATIONS*

*After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, 2nd Edition, 2018*

*U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS*

*National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, rev. 2012*

*Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, 2012*

*Legal references (continued next page)*

## **SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

### *Management Resources: (continued)*

#### *WEB SITES*

*American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org>*  
*American Association of Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org>*  
*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org>*  
*American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>*  
*American School Counselor Association: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org>*  
*California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>*  
*California Department of Health Care Services, Mental Health Services:  
<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH>*  
*California Mental Health Services Authority: <https://www.calmhsa.org>*  
*CalSCHLS: <https://calschls.org>*  
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>*  
*Crisis Text Line: <https://www.crisistextline.org>*  
*Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement: <https://emmresourcecenter.org>*  
*HEARD Alliance: <https://www.heardalliance.org>*  
*Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission: <https://mhsoac.ca.gov>*  
*National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: <https://theactionalliance.org>*  
*National Association of School Psychologists: <https://www.nasponline.org>*  
*National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org>*  
*National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>*  
*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <https://www.samhsa.gov>*  
*Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>*  
*Suicide Prevention Messaging: <https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org>*  
*Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <https://www.sprc.org/about-suicide>*  
*Trevor Project: <http://thetrevorproject.org>*  
*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

**Staff Development**

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, interns, counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, tutors, and volunteers. The training shall be offered under the direction of a LACOE 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.

*(cf. 1240 - Volunteer Assistance)*

*(cf. 4112.21 - Interns)*

*(cf. 4121 - Temporary/Substitute Personnel)*

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 5142 - Safety)*

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 their families to those services. Materials also may 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 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
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

*(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)*

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 a student's 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

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

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

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*

*(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)*

8. Appropriate ways to interact with a student who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal and LACOE 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. LACOE procedures for responding after a suicide has occurred shall be found in the school site's comprehensive safety plan
10. Common misconceptions about suicide

LACOE may provide additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention to LACOE mental health professionals, including, but not limited to, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses.

**Instruction**

LACOE'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 of and risk factors associated with suicide, including, but not limited to, understanding how mental health challenges and emotional distress, such as how 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

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

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 LACOE's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures; and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*  
*(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)*  
*(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)*

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

*(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)*

6. Recognize that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide

The County Superintendent or designee may develop and implement school activities that raise awareness about mental health wellness and suicide prevention.

*(cf. 6145.8 - Assemblies and Special Events)*

**Student Identification Cards**

Student identification cards, when issued, shall include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line and/or a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number. (Education Code 215.5)

**Intervention**

The County Superintendent or designee shall provide the name, title, and contact information of the members of the LACOE and/or school crisis intervention team(s) to students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers and on school and LACOE web sites. 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.

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

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 LACOE intervention protocols as appropriate.

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, or 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)

*(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)*

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.

*(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)*

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

*(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)*

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

*(cf. 5125 - Student Records)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

The principal 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 principal 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 principal 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.

*(cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting)*

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 County 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 County Superintendent or designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

The County 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 County 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 LACOE-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. LACOE's response shall not sensationalize suicide and shall focus on the LACOE postvention plan and available resources.

*(cf. 1112- Media Relations)*

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the County 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.