

Pupil Suicide Prevention

Intent of Policy

The Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that identifying students at-risk of suicide requires vigilant attention from properly trained District staff.

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent or designee shall develop strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement preventive strategies and intervention procedures that include the following:

Suicide Prevention Liaison(s)

The District shall appoint the superintendent to act as the District's primary suicide prevention liaison ("Liaison"). At the discretion of the Superintendent, the District may designate a second staff member as the secondary Liaison. The Liaisons will be individuals who have received advanced training in suicide intervention.

Overall Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention

The Liaison shall, to the extent possible, involve school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses), administrators, other school staff members, parents/guardians/caregivers, students, local health agencies and professionals, law enforcement, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the District's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. The District shall work in conjunction with local government agencies, community-based organizations, and other community supports to identify additional resources.

To ensure the District's policy regarding suicide prevention is properly adopted, implemented, and updated, the Liaison(s) shall serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for the District.

Suicide Prevention Strategies

The District shall implement the following suicide prevention strategies:

1. Messaging

The District shall use appropriate messaging designed to raise awareness and promote suicide prevention. All messaging shall be developed with the assistance of mental health professionals knowledgeable in suicide prevention.

2. Suicide Prevention Training and Education for Staff

All school staff members and other adults on campus (including substitutes and intermittent staff, volunteers, interns, tutors, coaches, and afterschool staff) shall be offered training on suicide prevention. Any training program(s) used by the District shall be reviewed by the Liaison and mental health professionals to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

3. Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

District staff members shall act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. The purpose of this policy is to assist school professionals in the identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior. However, the District recognizes that the treatment of suicidal ideation requires specialized training which is typically beyond the scope of services and mental health resources offered and/or available in the school setting.

4. Specialized Staff Training (Assessment)

Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to mental health professionals (school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses) employed by the District.

5. Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Participation and Education

Whenever possible, parents shall be included in the District's suicide prevention efforts. At a minimum, schools shall share with parents/guardians/caregivers the District's suicide prevention policy and procedures. The District shall provide parents with access to suicide prevention information on:

- Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors;
- How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide;
- How to respond appropriately to a student who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and referral for an immediate suicide risk assessment.

6. Student Education

In consultation with mental health professionals, the District shall provide developmentally appropriate education to students regarding:

- The warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress;
- Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma; and
- How to recognize the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others.

In addition, the District will provide students with guidance on how they may access and/or refer their peers to the District's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures, and any available community resources.

The District may also implement campus-based programs designed to raise student awareness of mental wellness and suicide prevention that may include:

- Mental Health Awareness Weeks;
- Peer Counseling Programs;
- Other appropriate programs of a similar nature.

Procedures for Intervention, Assessment, Referral

The District shall develop and implement suicide prevention procedures including the following:

1. Staff Intervention

District staff shall use the following procedures when they suspect or have knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions:

- a. Whenever a District staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they shall promptly notify a Liaison. If the primary Liaison is not available, the staff member shall contact the secondary Liaison. If a Liaison is not available, then the staff member shall contact a District administrator.
- b. Students experiencing suicidal ideation shall not be left unsupervised.
- c. Once a Liaison has been notified, the Liaison shall notify the principal, another school administrator, school psychologist or school counselor, if different from the Liaison.
- d. The principal, another school administrator, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or nurse shall then notify, if appropriate and in the best interest of the student, the student's parents/guardians/caregivers as soon as possible and shall refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.

- e. If the student is in imminent danger, then District staff shall make a 911 call.

2. Notification to Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

A referral process should be prominently disseminated to all parents/guardians/caregivers, so they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and community-based resources.

The names, titles, and contact information of the District's multi-disciplinary crisis team members shall be distributed to all students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers and be prominently available on the web sites for the District and each school site.

3. Students

The District students shall be encouraged to notify a staff member when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or attempt.

4. Parental Notification and Involvement

Each school within the District shall identify a process to ensure continuing care for the student identified to be at risk of suicide. The following steps should be followed to ensure continuity of care:

- After a referral is made for a student, school staff shall verify with the parent/guardian/caregiver that follow-up treatment has been accessed.
- If parents/guardians/caregivers refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at-risk for suicide or in emotional distress, a Liaison will meet with the parents/guardians/caregivers to identify barriers to and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of the importance of care. If follow-up care for the student is still not provided, school staff should explore what additional steps, if any, the District might take to ensure the student's safety.

5. Action Plan for In-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt is made during the school day on campus, it is important that the District staff members understand that the health and safety of the student and those around him/her is critical. The following steps should be implemented:

- Remain calm, remember the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed;
- Move all other students out of the immediate area;

- Immediately contact the administrator or suicide prevention Liaison;
- Call 911 and give them as much information about any suicide note, medications taken, and access to weapons, if applicable;
- If needed, provide medical first aid until a medical professional is available;
- A Liaison should be notified so that parents/guardians/caregivers may be contacted as soon as possible;
- Do not send the student away or leave them alone, even if they need to go to the restroom;
- Review options and resources of people who can help; and
- Student should only be released to parents/guardians/caregivers or to a person who is qualified and trained to provide help.

6. Action Plan for Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt by a student occurs outside of the District's property, it is crucial that the District protect the privacy of the student and maintain a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the student. The District Liaison, administrators, and other trained staff shall consider the following steps, as appropriate to each circumstance.

- Contact the parents/guardians/caregivers and offer support to the family;
- Discuss with the family how they would like the school to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students;
- Obtain permission from the parents/guardians/caregivers to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis is correct;
- Designate an administrator or designee to handle media requests;
- Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students; and
- Offer to the student and parents/guardians/caregivers steps for re-integration to school.

7. Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis

It is crucial that careful steps are taken to help provide the mental health support for the student and to monitor their actions for any signs of suicide. The following steps should be implemented after the crisis has happened:

- Treat every threat with seriousness and approach it with a calm manner; make the student a priority;
- Listen actively and without judgment to the student. Let the student express his or her feelings;
- Acknowledge the feelings and do not argue with the student;
- Offer hope and let the student know they are safe and that help is provided. Do not promise confidentiality or cause stress;
- Explain the need for help calmly and get the student to a trained professional, guidance counselor, or designated staff to further support the student; and
- Keep close contact with the parents/guardians/caregivers and mental health professionals working with the student.

8. Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt

The District recognizes that a student who threatened or attempted suicide is at a higher risk for suicide in the months following the crisis. A timely and carefully planned re-entry process helps ensure the safety and wellbeing of students who have previously attempted suicide and reduces the risk of another attempt. Involving students in planning for their return to school provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment.

A District Liaison or appropriately trained designee shall implement the following steps upon the student's reentry into the school:

- Obtain a written release of information signed by parents/guardians/caregivers and providers;
- Confer with student and parents/guardians/caregivers about any specific requests on how to handle the situation;
- Inform the student's teachers about possible days of absences;
- Allow accommodations for student to make up work - understanding that missed assignments may result in additional stress on student;
- Mental health professionals or trusted staff members should maintain ongoing contact to monitor student's actions and mood;
- Work with parents/guardians/caregivers to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

9. Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

The District recognizes that a death by suicide in the school community, whether by a student or staff member, can have devastating consequences on students and staff. It is vital that the

District is prepared in the event of this tragedy. The Liaison(s) shall ensure that each school site adopts an action plan for responding to a suicide death as part of the general Crisis Response Plan. The Suicide Death Response Action Plan (“Suicide Postvention Response Plan”) will incorporate both immediate and long-term steps and objectives.

(Ed. Code, §§ 215, 216.)

Adopted: May 11, 2023