Sonoma BOE
Board Policy
Suicide Prevention

BP 5141.52
Students

The Sonoma County Board of Education 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. In an effort to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the County Superintendent or designee shall develop measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in county office of education (County Office) schools.

In developing measures and strategies for use by the County Office, the County Superintendent or designee may consult with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, suicide prevention experts, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)
(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)

Such measures and strategies shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, school counselors, and other County Office employees who interact with students in grades 7-12

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)

2. Instruction to secondary 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

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

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 suicide problem among youth, the County Office'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 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

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)

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.

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. The County Board encourages
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 to promptly notify the principal or school counselor,
who shall implement County Office intervention protocols as appropriate.

School employees shall act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license.
An employee is not authorized to diagnose or treat mental illness unless specifically licensed and
employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

Student identification cards 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 County Board shall review, and update as necessary, this policy at least every five years.
(Education Code 215)

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
32280-32289 Comprehensive safety plan
49060-49079 Student records
49602 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
5850-5883 Children’s Mental Health Services Act
COURT DECISIONS

Management Resources:
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS
Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade
Twelve, 2008
Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS
School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PUBLICATIONS
Preventing Suicide, Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, 2015
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS
WEB SITES
American Association of Suicidology:  http://www.suicidology.org
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:  http://afsp.org
American Psychological Association:  http://www.apa.org
American School Counselor Association:  http://www.schoolcounselor.org
California Department of Education, Mental Health:  http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh
California Department of Health Care Services, Suicide Prevention Program:  http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/SuicidePrevention.aspx
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health:  http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth
National Association of School Psychologists:  http://www.nasponline.org
National Institute for Mental Health:  http://www.nimh.nih.gov
Trevor Project:  http://thetrevorproject.org
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:  http://www.samhsa.gov

Policy  SONOMA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
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