

Regulation 5141.52: Suicide Prevention

~~The possibility of suicide and suicidal ideation requires vigilant attention from our school staff. As a result, we are ethically and legally responsible for providing an appropriate and timely response in preventing suicidal ideation, attempts, and deaths. We also must work to create a safe and nurturing campus that minimizes suicidal ideation in students.¶~~

~~Recognizing that it is the duty of the district and schools to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students, this policy aims to safeguard students and staff against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide, including ensuring adequate supports for students, staff, and families affected by suicide attempts and loss. As it is known that the emotional wellness of students greatly impacts school attendance and educational success, this policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of students.¶~~

~~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.~~

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 ~~215.5~~215)

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, interns, counselors, and ~~other district employees~~ 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, psychologist, and/or in~~ cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies. Training shall be provided for all school staff members and other adults on campus (including substitutes and intermittent staff, ~~volunteers, interns, tutors, coaches, and expanded learning [afterschool] staff~~) 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 ~~their~~ families to those services. ~~Materials also may~~ Training materials may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials. (Education Code 215) ~~— Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, Redwood City School District along with its partners has critically reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide. ¶~~

Staff

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 ~~bereaved~~ impacted by suicide; students with ~~disabilities~~ 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 youth ~~—~~
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. ~~Warning~~ 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 ~~and~~, 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 ~~monitoring the student~~ **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 ~~students~~ 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 ~~at grade 7 and grade 8~~ **in an age and developmentally appropriate manner** and shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze **warning signs** ~~of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how~~ **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 ~~and~~ 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. Intervention~~
7. 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 ~~or~~, 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, ~~referenced~~ **discussed**, or ~~discussed~~ **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. ~~(Education Code 49602)~~ **¶**

~~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, or to report child abuse and neglect as required by Penal Code 11164-11174.3. (Education Code 21549602)~~

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 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 ~~next~~ 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 ~~best 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. ¶

~~In support of the efforts to reduce youth suicide, and to help Districts prevent and respond to youth suicide, the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) and San Mateo County Health System created the San Mateo County Schools Suicide Prevention Toolkit. The toolkit was developed through an extensive collaborative process involving community stakeholders, school mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts including staff from County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS). It outlines guidelines for identifying, intervening, and responding to suicidal and self-injurious students. It also offers best practices to school site crisis teams to be used in the aftermath of a student death by suicide.¶~~

~~The toolkit is divided into three sections:¶~~

~~The first section provides guidelines regarding the training and education of staff, formation of a crisis response team, signs of students at risk for suicide, student risk assessments, and responses to student self injury, hospitalization, and suicide.↵~~

~~↵~~

~~The second section provides important forms, including forms for use by mental health professionals and members of the school site crisis response team and/or administration to evaluate, respond to, and document a suicide risk assessment, as well as forms documenting the release of a student to parents for psychiatric assessments and materials to provide to students and parents in the event of a suicide.↵~~

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~~The final section of the toolkit contains the Return to School Information Packet that will help staff work with students and parents as a student transitions back to school after a suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization.¶~~

~~To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, the district shall appoint an individual (or team) to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for the district. In addition, each school shall identify at least one staff member to serve as the liaison to the district's suicide prevention point of contact, and coordinate and implement suicide prevention activities on their specific campus. This policy shall be reviewed and revised as indicated, at least annually in conjunction with the previously mentioned community stakeholders.¶~~

~~To the extent possible, parents/guardians/caregivers should be included in all suicide prevention efforts. At a minimum, schools shall share with parents/guardians/caregivers the Redwood City School District suicide prevention policy and procedures.¶~~

~~This suicide prevention policy shall be prominently displayed on the Redwood City School District Web page and included in the parent handbook.¶~~

~~Parents/guardians/caregivers should be invited to provide input on the development and implementation of this policy.¶~~

~~All parents/guardians/caregivers should have access to suicide prevention training that addresses the following:¶~~

~~Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors;¶~~

~~←~~

~~How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide;¶~~

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~~How to respond appropriately to the 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.~~