

CSBA Sample Board Policy

Students

BP 5141.52(a)

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Note: The Government Claims Act (Government Code 810-996.6) provides that a district may be liable for injuries on school grounds or for an employee's failure to exercise supervisory responsibility to use reasonable care to prevent foreseeable injuries resulting from school activities. **Therefore, it is strongly recommended that, before adopting the following optional policy and administrative regulation, districts carefully review all the elements, consider their staff capabilities and resources, and delete or modify them as necessary to ensure that all aspects will be adequately enforced. Districts should also consult with legal counsel and the district's risk manager or insurance carrier, as appropriate.**

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent or designee shall develop preventive strategies and intervention procedures.

The Superintendent or designee may involve school health professionals, school counselors, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies and professionals, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating the district's strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)

(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)

Prevention and Instruction

Note: The following **optional** section may be revised to reflect district practice. The California Department of Education's (CDE) [Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools](#) identifies factors that may help build resiliency and protect against high-risk behaviors, including, but not limited to, emotional wellness, school engagement, self-perceived ability to cope with problems, and positive interpersonal relationships. For further information about strategies to protect students from bullying, cyberbullying, and other harassment, see BP 5131 - Conduct, BP 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment, and BP 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior.

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)

(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)

(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)

(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)

(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

Note: The state's Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools include voluntary content standards pertaining to mental, emotional, and social health at selected elementary and secondary grades and suicide prevention instruction at grade 7 or 8 and in high school. The district may revise the following **optional** paragraph to reflect grade levels offered by the district.

The district's comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and self-esteem. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum in the secondary grades. Such instruction shall be aligned with state content standards and shall be designed to help students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

The Superintendent or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

Staff Development

Note: The following **optional** section may be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 49604 encourages each district to provide suicide prevention training to each middle, junior high, and high school counselor.

Staff development may include training about risk factors associated with suicide, as provided in item #1 below. Information about research on risk factors is available in the CDE's [Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools](#) as well as through the California Department of Mental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Association of Suicidology, and other health organizations.

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be designed to help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training shall be offered under the direction of a district counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior
3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health
4. School and community resources and services

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)
(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

5. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide

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

Intervention

Note: The following **optional** section should be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 49602, which requires confidentiality of information disclosed to a school counselor by students 12 years of age or older, specifically allows a counselor to disclose such information to the principal or parents/guardians of the student when he/she has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure is necessary to avert a clear and present danger to the student's health or safety. In addition, Education Code 49602 allows disclosure to psychotherapists, other health care providers, or the school nurse for the sole purpose of referring the student for treatment.

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the principal or school counselor. The principal or counselor shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible and may refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community.

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

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.

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall complete the suicide prevention curriculum, including identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

Note: For sample procedures to be followed in the event of a suicide attempt on campus, see the accompanying administrative regulation.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications in the event that a suicide occurs or an attempt is made on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

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*

WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE

5698 *Emotionally disturbed youth; legislative intent*

5850-5883 *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 Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008

Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools, 2005

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH PUBLICATIONS

California Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention: Every Californian is Part of the Solution, 2008

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS

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

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, 2001

WEB SITES

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>

California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>

California Department of Mental Health, Children and Youth Programs:

http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Services_and_Programs/Children_and_Youth

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>

National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

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Policy Reference UPDATE Service

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CSBA Sample Administrative Regulation

Students

AR 5141.52(a)

SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Instruction

Note: The following **optional** section reflects topics of instruction recommended by suicide prevention resources and is consistent with the state's Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, which include standards pertaining to suicide prevention instruction at grade 7 or 8 and high school.

At appropriate secondary grades, the district's suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors and understand how feelings of depression, loss, isolation, inadequacy, and anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills
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, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention services

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

Intervention

Note: The following **optional** section may be revised to reflect district practice. For additional information about steps that school personnel can take when a student threatens or attempts suicide, see the California Department of Education's [Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools](#).

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the principal or designee shall:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
 - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred
 - b. Securing 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

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

2. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, including the school counselor, psychologist, nurse, superintendent, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies
3. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

4. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed
5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at the school
6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions

<p>Note: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 32280-32289 require schools to develop and implement comprehensive school safety plans; see BP/AR 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan. If the district's safety plan includes crisis intervention strategies, those strategies may encompass procedures that the district will use in the aftermath of a suicide or attempted suicide. Also see BP 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services for policy language pertaining to crisis counseling.</p>

In the event that a suicide occurs or is attempted on campus, the principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the school safety plan. After consultation with the Superintendent or designee and the student's parents/guardians about

SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. School staff may receive assistance from school counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 1112- Media Relations)

SAMPLE