

Policy 5141.52: Suicide Prevention

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 07/01/2009 | **Last Revised Date:** 03/01/2025 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 03/01/2025

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 215 mandates the Governing Board of any district serving students in grades K-12 to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (i.e., intervention conducted after a suicide) with specified components. The required components are addressed in this policy and the accompanying administrative regulation.

Pursuant to Education Code 215, as amended by SB 1318 (Ch. 645, Statutes of 2024), the California Department of Education (CDE) is required, by July 1, 2026, to update its, "Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy for Local Educational Agencies that Serve Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade Students," to address crisis intervention protocols in the event of a student suicide crisis. On or after July 1, 2026, the Board is required to, during its next regularly scheduled review of its student suicide prevention policy, update its policy to include the best practices identified in CDE's updated Model Policy.

The following policy is consistent with CDE's Model Policy, which also includes an extensive list of resources to assist in the prevention, intervention, and postvention of student suicide. Districts are encouraged to work closely with their county behavioral health department to identify and access resources at the local level.

The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission developed a suicide prevention plan for the state which is published in, "Striving for Zero: California's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020-2025," available on its website. The plan presents strategic aims, with related goals, objectives, and an implementation schedule. Districts may find the strategic plan useful in learning more about the stigma associated with behavioral health needs, myths and misconceptions about suicidal behavior and its hinderance to prevention efforts, suicidal behavior, risk and protective factors, and best practices in suicide prevention. Additionally, the Commission published, "Accelerating Transformational Change: Strategic Plan for 2024-2027," which includes the goals of supporting school-based mental health.

The California Department of Public Health, Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) is the designated state entity responsible for coordinating and aligning statewide suicide prevention efforts and resources. OSP's youth suicide prevention projects, including the Youth Suicide Prevention Media and Outreach Campaign, are available on OSP's website. The California Department of Health Care Services provides free mental health and wellness resources to schools through its CalHOPE Schools Initiative.

Additionally, SchoolSafety.gov is an interagency website created by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide districts with actionable recommendations to create safe and supportive learning environments for students, including information about suicide management.

The following policy and accompanying administrative regulation should be revised to reflect district practice and the grade levels offered by the district.

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, that prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, 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, its impact on students and families, and other associated trauma, the Superintendent or designee shall develop measures, strategies, practices, and supports for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing and updating district policy and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. If the policy will affect K-6 students, the county mental health plan shall also be consulted. (Education Code 215)

CSBA NOTE: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 215 does not define "school and community stakeholders" or "school-employed mental health professionals" who must be consulted in the development of policy. The following paragraph details examples that are consistent with CSBA and CDE recommendations.

School and community stakeholders and school mental health professionals with whom the Superintendent or designee shall consult may include district and 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 the district's risk manager or

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The 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 Superintendent or designee shall develop measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing policy and strategies for suicide prevention and intervention, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders such as administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, and students; school-employed mental health professionals such as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses; suicide prevention experts such as local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations; law enforcement; and, in developing policy for grades K-6, the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

The Board shall ensure that measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 are age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. (Education Code 215)

Measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, school counselors, and other district employees who interact with students, as described in the accompanying administrative regulation
2. Instruction to 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
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 district'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
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. (Education Code 215)

If a referral is made for mental health or related services for a student in grade K-6 who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, the Superintendent or designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

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

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

The Superintendent or designee shall post this policy on the district's web site, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

insurance carrier. The Superintendent or designee may also collaborate with county and/or city governments in an effort to align district policy with any existing community suicide prevention plans.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 215, as amended by SB 1318, if the district does not have a school mental health professional or contract with a mental health professional, the Board is encouraged to consider, when reviewing its policy on suicide prevention, whether funding should be identified for purposes of hiring a school mental health professional.

When developing or reviewing district policy on suicide prevention, the Superintendent or designee may make a recommendation regarding the need to hire a mental health professional for the district, or for any school that is not currently served by a mental health professional, and the possible funding source(s) for such hiring.

Measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention shall include, but are not limited to:

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 215 mandates that the district's policy address any training on suicide awareness and prevention to be provided to teachers of students in all grade levels served by the district. See the accompanying administrative regulation for additional language fulfilling this mandate. Additionally, Education Code 49604 encourages each district to provide suicide prevention training at least once to each middle, junior high, and high school counselor. Item #1 should be revised to specify the categories of employees who will receive the training.

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, interns, school counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, coaches, expanded day learning staff, crossing guards, tutors, and volunteers

CSBA NOTE: Items #2-9 below reflect optional strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention and may be revised to reflect district practice.

2. Instruction to students in problem-solving, coping, and resiliency skills to promote students' mental, emotional, and social health and well-being; help-seeking strategies and resources; and instruction in recognizing and appropriately responding to warning signs of suicidal intent in others
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 relationships among students
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 regarding risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, the severity of the suicide problem among youth, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, the district's 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

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 215, as amended by SB 1318, CDE is required to update its Model Policy, by July 1, 2026, to address crisis intervention protocols in the event of a student suicide crisis. The Board is required to update its suicide prevention policy to include the best practices identified in CDE's updated Model Policy when it next reviews this policy after July 1, 2026.

7. Crisis intervention protocols for addressing suicide threats or attempts
8. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide

CSBA NOTE: The National Association of School Psychologists recommends that the district and/or school sites create a suicide prevention crisis team to assist in effectively identifying and intervening with students who are at risk of suicidal behavior, including adoption and implementation of policies and procedures. It is recommended that such teams include, at a minimum, administration, mental health staff, and school security personnel. CDE also recommends that students are included on the team, to represent the student voice. The same crisis intervention team may be established to address broader mental health concerns as described in

BP 5141.5 - Mental Health.

9. Establishment of district and/or school-site crisis intervention team(s) to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other district practices related to the emotional and behavioral wellness of students, including, but not limited to, the oversight of mental health and suicide prevention training, ensuring the suicide prevention policy, protocols, and resources are posted on the district and school websites, 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

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 215 mandates that the district's policy specifically address the needs of high-risk groups, including, but not limited to, those listed in the following paragraph. See the accompanying administrative regulation for additional language fulfilling this mandate.

CDE's Model Policy encourages districts to use the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Surveys or other survey data to determine the prevalence of suicidal ideation and behaviors, including patterns or trends, among all students, particularly among identified high-risk populations.

Pursuant to Education Code 218.3, CDE has developed and posted on its website, "Providing Relevant Inclusive Support that Matters for LGBTQ Students (PRISM)," a training curriculum for certificated staff to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) cultural competency. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, through the 2029-30 school year, districts are required to provide at least one hour of training annually to all certificated employees serving students in grades 7-12, in accordance with Education Code 218.3.

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 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. (Education Code 215)

CSBA NOTE: USDOE and DOJ's joint publication, "Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Students at Risk of Self-Harm in the Era of COVID-19," provides that anxiety, depression, or substance use disorder may be considered a mental health disability that entitles a student to special education or related services in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. While this is written in response to the pandemic, the guidance may be interpreted as having a more general applicability. The following optional paragraph reflects this guidance.

In order to address mental health disabilities, the district may, as appropriate and in accordance with law, develop trauma-informed crisis management procedures that include an individualized assessment of the student's circumstances; provide and facilitate access to mental health evaluations and services; reasonably modify policies, such as attendance policies, for individual students; and train staff to recognize and respond appropriately to signs of distress and suicidal ideation in students.

CSBA NOTE: The following two optional paragraphs may be revised to reflect district practice. The paragraphs are consistent with CDE's Model Policy that recommends protocols for maintaining staff connection with students during school closures, in order to support student mental wellbeing and provide guidance on suicide prevention.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish a process for school staff to maintain daily or regular contact with all students, including during distance learning and school closures, and for such staff to communicate any concerns about a student's emotional wellbeing and/or safety to the appropriate authorities.

Additionally, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure that school-based mental health professionals maintain regular contact with high-risk students, students who are on their caseloads, and those who are identified by staff as demonstrating need.

CSBA NOTE: The following two paragraphs are for use by districts that serve students in grades K-6.

The Board shall ensure that suicide prevention measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 are age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. (Education Code 215)

If a referral is made for mental health or related services for a student in grade K-6 who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, the Superintendent or designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

District 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 district employees to diagnose or treat mental illness unless

they are specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

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.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 215 requires that the district's student suicide prevention policy be updated to incorporate best practices identified in CDE's Model Policy. Education Code 215 also requires that the district's suicide prevention policy be updated at least every five years. Given the severity of the issue and importance of maintaining an up-to-date suicide prevention policy, CSBA and CDE recommend reviewing and updating this policy annually. The following paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice.

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

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