

# CSBA Sample Board Policy

Students

BP 5141.52(a)

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **mandates** that the Governing Board of any district serving students in grades 7-12 adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (i.e., intervention conducted after a suicide) with specified components. Those components are addressed in the following policy and the accompanying administrative regulation. Also see the California Department of Education's model policy required by Education Code 215.

The following policy and accompanying administrative regulation should be revised to reflect district practice. Pursuant to Education Code 215, the policy must be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. It is recommended that districts also consult with legal counsel and the district's risk manager or insurance carrier, as appropriate.

The Governing Board 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. To attempt 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 measures and strategies for use by the district, the Superintendent or designee may consult with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

*(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)*

*(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:

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **mandates** that the district's policy address any training to be provided to teachers of students in grades 7-12 on suicide awareness and prevention. See the accompanying administrative regulation for additional language fulfilling this mandate. In addition, 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 may be revised to specify other categories of employees who will receive the training.

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, school counselors, and other district employees who interact with students in the secondary grades

## SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

Note: Items #2-7 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 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

*(cf. 5131 - Conduct)*

*(cf. 5131.2 - Bullying)*

*(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)*

*(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)*

*(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)*

4. The provision of information to parents/guardians regarding risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the youth suicide problem, 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

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **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.

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 PREVENTION (continued)**

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)

### *Legal Reference:*

#### EDUCATION CODE

215 Student suicide prevention policies  
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 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*

*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

*Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, 2012*

*National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, rev. 2012*

*Management Resources: (see next page)*

**SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

*Management Resources: (continued)*

WEB SITES

*American Association of Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org>*

*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org>*

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

*American School Counselor Association: <https://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: <https://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>*

# CSBA Sample Administrative Regulation

Students

AR 5141.52(a)

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

Note: Pursuant to Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), districts serving students in grades 7-12 are **mandated** to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (i.e., intervention conducted after a suicide). See the accompanying Board policy. The following administrative regulation provides additional strategies that fulfill the mandate and may be revised to reflect district practice.

Examples of suicide prevention strategies are available in the California Department of Education's (CDE) model policy created in response to AB 2246, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publication Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, and resources issued by other state and federal agencies and organizations. For further information about strategies to protect students from bullying, cyberbullying, and other harassment, see BP 5131 - Conduct, BP 5131.2 - Bullying, BP 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment, and BP 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior.

## Staff Development

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **mandates** that the district's policy and procedures address any training to be provided to teachers of students in grades 7-12 on suicide awareness and prevention. In addition, Education Code 49604 encourages each district to provide suicide prevention training at least once to each middle, junior high, and high school counselor. The following section may be revised to reflect district practice.

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, counselors, and other district employees who interact with students at the secondary level. 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.

*(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*

*(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

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 include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials. (Education Code 215)

Staff development shall include research and information related to the following topics:

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), mandates that the district's policy specifically address the needs of high-risk groups; see the accompanying Board policy. One strategy to specifically address their needs is to increase staff awareness of the higher rates of suicide among these groups, as provided in item #1 below.

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

1. The higher risk of suicide among certain groups, 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

Note: Staff development may include training about risk factors associated with suicide, as provided in item #2 below. Information about risk factors is available from the CDE, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Trevor Project, and other agencies and organizations.

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 stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors

*(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)*

3. 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 person'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
6. School and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups

*(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)*

*(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)*

7. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide

**Instruction**

Note: The state's content standards for health education include voluntary 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 paragraph to reflect grade levels offered by the district.

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

The district's comprehensive health education program shall promote the healthy 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 appropriate secondary grades and 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. Develop coping and resiliency skills and 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, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking services for mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention

*(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: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **mandates** that the district's policy and procedures address suicide intervention. The following section should be revised to reflect district practice.

In addition, the district may choose to incorporate crisis intervention strategies in its comprehensive school safety plan adopted pursuant to Education Code 32280-32289; see BP/AR 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan.

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. 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, he/she shall promptly notify the principal or school counselor.

## **SUICIDE PREVENTION (continued)**

Note: Education Code 49602 generally protects the confidentiality of information of a personal nature disclosed to a school counselor by a student age 12 years or older or by a parent/guardian. However, in certain circumstances, the counselor may disclose such information to avert a clear and present danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the student. Also see BP 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services.

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with third parties, the counselor may report to the principal or student's parents/guardians when he/she has reasonable cause to believe that disclosure is necessary to avert a clear and present danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the student. 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)

*(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)*

A school employee shall act only within the authorization and scope of his/her credential or license. An employee is not authorized to diagnose or treat mental illness unless he/she is specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

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.

*(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)*

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 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

*(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)*

*(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)*

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.



**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

*(cf. 5125 - Student Records)*

Note: The following paragraph is **optional**. If a student's parents/guardians refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at risk for suicide, the Superintendent or designee shall consider whether a referral to child protective services for child neglect is needed. Pursuant to Penal Code 11164-11174.3, the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, school employees who are mandated reporters are required to report child abuse or neglect, as defined in law, when they have knowledge of or reasonably suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect. See BP/AR 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting.

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 he/she is required, pursuant to laws for mandated reporters of child neglect, to refer the matter to the local child protective services agency.

*(cf. 5141.4 - Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting)*

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.

**Postvention**

Note: Education Code 215, as added by AB 2246 (Ch. 642, Statutes of 2016), **mandates** that the district's policy and procedures address suicide postvention. The following section should be revised to reflect district practice.

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.

Note: Research has identified an increased risk of suicide among youth who are grieving the suicide of another (so-called "suicide contagion"). The National Association of School Psychologists, in its [Preventing Suicide, Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams](#), recommends that memorials should be implemented with care so as not to sensationalize or glamorize suicide and thereby increase the suicide risk to other students. If a memorial is conducted for a student who dies by suicide, the association suggests a living memorial, such as making donations to a local crisis center, participating in an event that raises awareness about suicide prevention, or providing other opportunities for service activities in the school.

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** (continued)

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. He/she shall 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.

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.

*(cf. 1112- Media Relations)*

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.