

## FRESNO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

**Students**  
**SUICIDE PREVENTION**

The County Superintendent or designee shall work with appropriate County Superintendent staff to develop a coordinated overall strategic approach to suicide prevention planning, and may seek to coordinate with county school districts, local health agencies and professionals, law enforcement, community organizations, parents/guardians, students, and community members.

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)

Prevention and Staff Development

Suicide prevention training may be provided to teachers, interns, counselors, and other County Superintendent employees who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, coaches, expanded day learning staff, crossing guards, tutors, and volunteers. Any training offered shall be under the direction of a County Superintendent counselor, psychologist, and/or 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 within County districts, at school sites, 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 may 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 impacted by suicide; students with exceptional needs, mental illness, or substance

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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.

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. 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, 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 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. County Superintendent procedures for responding after a suicide has occurred.
10. Common misconceptions about suicide.

The County Superintendent may provide additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention to County Superintendent mental health professionals, including, but not limited to, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses.

**Instruction**

Comprehensive health education offered by the County Superintendent may promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students and may be aligned with the state content standards and curriculum framework. Suicide prevention instruction may be incorporated into the

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health education curriculum in an age and developmentally appropriate manner and may be designed to help students:

1. Identify and analyze warning signs 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 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 County Superintendent'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. Recognize that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

The County 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 County Superintendent or designee may provide the name, title, and contact information of the members of the County Superintendent and/or school crisis intervention team(s) to students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers and post on school and County Superintendent websites. Such notifications may 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.

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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, school counselor, or designated reporter, who shall implement County Superintendent intervention protocols as appropriate.

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, discussed, or 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, or to report child abuse and neglect as required by Penal Code 11164-11174.3. (Education Code 49602)

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 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, and ensuring notification of schoolsite administration.
4. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible.
5. The schoolsite administrator or designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported at a schoolsite not operated by the County Superintendent, County Superintendent employees working at that schoolsite shall follow the intervention guidelines of that County district and/or schoolsite, in conjunction with the first four actions listed, above.

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 schoolsite administration or designee, school counselor, or school psychologist.

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For schoolsites operated by the County Superintendent, the County 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 County 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 County 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 schoolsites not operated by the County Superintendent, County Superintendent employees working at that schoolsite shall follow that County district's and/or schoolsite's follow up procedures.

For any student returning to a schoolsite operated by the County Superintendent after a mental health crisis, the schoolsite administrator or designee and/or school counselor may meet with the parents/guardians and, if appropriate, with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school to determine the need for ongoing support.

For any student returning to a schoolsite not operated by the County Superintendent after a mental health crisis, County Superintendent employees working at that schoolsite shall follow that County district's and/or schoolsite's student re-entry procedures.

**Postvention**

In the event that a student attending a schoolsite operated by the County Superintendent dies by suicide, the County 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 County Superintendent or designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

In the event that a student attending a schoolsite not operated by the County Superintendent dies by suicide, County Superintendent employees working at that schoolsite shall follow that County district's and/or schoolsite's procedures regarding communication with the student's parents/guardians, efforts to address grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion, and communication with the media.

For schoolsites operated by the County Superintendent, the County 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 County 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 to best discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the County Superintendent-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. The County Superintendent's

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response shall not sensationalize suicide and shall focus on the postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the County Superintendent or designee may provide an opportunity for all County Superintendent employees who responded to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

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