

# TULARE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

## Board Policy/Superintendent Policy

Students  
**BP/SP 5141.52**  
**Suicide Prevention**

### Suicide Prevention

The County Board of Education and County Superintendent recognize that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, and 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 trauma associated with suicide, the County Board shall incorporate any measures, strategies, practices, and supports developed by the County Superintendent for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) schools.

Policies and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention shall include consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, and, for the policy for students in grades K-6, coordination with the county mental health plan. [Education Code 215]

Consultation with school and community stakeholders may include TCOE 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 TCOE's risk manager or insurance carrier. Collaboration may also occur with county and/or city governments in an effort to align TCOE policy with any existing county, city, and/or statewide suicide prevention plans.

TCOE measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, as prepared by the County Superintendent, may include, but are not limited to:

1. A Tulare County Office of Education suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by the County Superintendent
2. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention offered by the County Superintendent for teachers, school counselors, and other employees who interact with students
3. Age and developmentally appropriate instruction to students in problem-solving, coping skills, and resiliency to promote students' mental, emotional, and social health and well-being ; help-seeking strategies and resources; and recognition of and appropriate response to warning signs of suicidal intent in others
4. 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

5. The provision of information to parents/guardians and caregivers regarding risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, the severity of the youth suicide problem, suicide prevention curriculum, TCOE'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
7. Crisis intervention procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts which include, but are not limited to, the following actions:
  - a. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services as necessary
  - b. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened
  - c. Keeping the student under 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
  - d. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible, if necessary
8. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide
9. 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
10. Establishment by the County Superintendent of TCOE and/or school-site crisis intervention team(s) to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other TCOE practices related to the emotional and behavioral wellness of students, including, but not limited to, the oversight of mental health and suicide prevention training, 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

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]

The measures and strategies may also address the needs of students with 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.

Measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 shall be age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. [Education Code 215]

Student identification cards for students in grades 7-12, when issued by the County Superintendent, 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. [Education Code 215.5]

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. It is the responsibility of the County Superintendent to ensure that any staff member who suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions based on the student's verbalizations or act of self-harm is encouraged to promptly notify the principal, school counselor, or designated suicide prevention coordinator, who shall implement TCOE intervention protocols as appropriate.

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

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging employees to act outside of the authorization or scope of their credential or to diagnose or treat mental illness unless specifically licensed and employed to do so. [Education Code 215]

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

TCOE data pertaining to school climate and reports of suicidal ideation, attempts, or death shall be periodically reviewed to identify patterns or trends and make recommendations regarding program development.

This policy shall be posted in a prominent location on TCOE's web site in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardian and students. [Education Code 234.6]

*Legal Reference:*

EDUCATION CODE

215 – Student suicide prevention policies

215.5 – Suicide prevention hotline contact information on student identification cards

216 – Suicide prevention online training programs

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

5850-5886 – Children's 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 12, 2008

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2019

#### 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

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

Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools, 2012

## WEB SITES

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

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

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

American School Counselor Association: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>

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

California Department of Health Care Services, Mental Health Services:

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH>

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

National Association of School Psychologists: <http://www.nasponline.org>

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

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <https://988lifeline.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <https://sprc.org/about-suicide/>

Trevor Project: <http://thetrevorproject.org>

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

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

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Tulare County Board of Education

Visalia, California

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