



Youth Suicide Prevention Policy

In developing measures and strategies for use by the district, the Executive Director 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.

Such measures and strategies shall include, but are not limited to: The strategies and measures described in Administrative Regulation 5141.52 and San Mateo County Schools Suicide Prevention Toolkit as may be altered from time to time.

1. Staff Development

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, counselors, and other SCCLC employees who interact with students in grades 7 and 8. The training shall be offered annually under the direction of a school counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies.

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.

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

- A. The higher risk of suicide among certain groups, including, but not limited to, learners who are bereaved by suicide; students with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; learners who are experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and learners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth
- B. 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
- C. 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
- D. 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

E. Instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health

F. School and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups

2. Counseling

SCCLC's counseling program will serve the diverse needs of SCCLC learners and, to the extent possible, focus on prevention and early intervention. Learners shall be encouraged to arrange a meeting with counseling staff whenever they desire to discuss academic, social or personal problems.

A. Individual & Small Group Counseling

Counseling staff also may identify and work with learners whose personal problems may prevent them from accessing their school curriculum and experience. As appropriate, learners shall be informed about agencies that offer qualified professional assistance with chemical dependency, physical or emotional problems, or other personal problems.

Counselors shall respect learner confidentiality as appropriate and shall consult with the Executive Director or designee whenever unsure of how to respond to a student's personal problem. Parental consultation and consent shall be obtained as appropriate.

C. Crisis Counseling

The SCCLC recognizes the need for a prompt and effective response when learners are confronted with a traumatic incident. The Executive Director or designee such as School Counselor or Therapist shall identify crisis counseling resources which may be called upon either to train district staff in appropriate response techniques or to directly help learners cope with such tragedies when they occur.

3. Instruction

The SCCLC's comprehensive social emotional learning program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of learners. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum in grades 7 and 8 shall be designed to help learners:

A. 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

B. Develop coping and resiliency skills and self-esteem

C. Learn to listen, be honest, share feelings, and get help when communicating with friends who show signs of suicidal intent

D. 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

4. Assessment & Intervention Process

SCCLC procedures for intervening when a learner attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide:

Learners shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, director, counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another learner's suicidal intentions.

Every statement regarding suicidal intent shall be taken seriously. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a learner's suicidal intentions based on the learner's verbalizations or act of self-harm, he/she shall promptly notify the Executive Director or school counselor.

Although any personal information that a learner discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with third parties, the counselor may report to the director and/or learner'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 learner. In addition, the counselor may disclose information of a personal nature to psychotherapists, other health care providers, school resource officer, and/or the school nurse for the sole purpose of referring the learner for treatment. (Education Code [49602](#))

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.

Anyone in the SCCLC who works with children who has suspicion that a child may inflict harm on him/herself has the duty to take action. **The SCCLC has established a Suicide Assessment Protocol for all team members to follow (See Appendix A)**

The Executive Director or designee shall follow up with the parent/guardian and learner in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed. If the parent/guardian does not access treatment for the learner, the Executive Director or designee may meet with the parent/guardian to identify barriers to treatment and assist the family in providing follow-up care for the learner. If follow-up care is still not provided, the Executive Director 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.

For any learner returning to school after a mental health crisis, the Executive Director or designee and/or school counselor may meet with the parents/guardians and, if appropriate, with the learner to discuss re-entry and appropriate next steps to ensure the learner's readiness for return to school.

5. Postvention Process

In the event that a learner dies by suicide, the Executive Director or designee shall communicate with the learner's parents/guardians to offer condolences, assistance, and resources. In accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of learner record information, the Executive Director or designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other learners, parents/guardians, and staff.

The Executive Director or designee shall implement procedures to address learners' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. He/she shall provide learners, 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 learners.

Any response to media inquiries shall be handled by the SCCLC-designated spokesperson who shall not divulge confidential information. The SCCLC's response shall not sensationalize suicide and shall focus on the school's postvention plan and available resources.

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a learner, the Executive Director 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.

(Portions of this policy were written using the San Carlos School District policy as a reference and guide.)