

Lewis Center for Educational Research

AR 5141.52: STUDENTS SUICIDE PREVENTION

Adopted: December 10, 2018

Revised: March 9, 2020

The Lewis Center for Educational Research (LCER) Board of Directors (Board) recognizes that suicide prevention is most effective when students, staff, parents, and community members have adequate information about prevention.

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training shall be provided to teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and other LCER employees who regularly interact with students. 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.

The Lewis Center for Educational Research will follow the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Safe Messaging Guidelines, available at <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/SafeMessagingrevised.pdf>, in suicide prevention education with staff. 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:

1. The higher risk of suicide among certain groups, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide or are experiencing bereavement by a different cause; 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; students who are being bullied; and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth.
2. Individual risk factors such as previous suicide attempt(s) or self-harm, history of depression or mental illness, family history of suicide, violence, or trauma, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, impulsivity, and other factors including any of the Adverse Childhood Experiences.
3. Warning signs that may indicate depression, emotional distress, or suicidal intentions, such as changes in student's personality or behavior and verbalization of hopelessness or suicidal ideation.

4. The role of school personnel as a protective factor may help to decrease a person's suicide risk aiding in factors such as resiliency, problem-solving ability, access to mental health care and encouraging positive connections to peers, school, and community.
5. School and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific need of high-risk groups.
6. District procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.

Intervention

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 ideations. Each school site shall develop and maintain a Student Support Team that will provide direction to the remaining members of the team along with school staff of necessary protocols and procedures.

Every statement regarding suicidal ideation shall be taken seriously. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal ideation, he/she shall promptly notify a school administrator or school counselor.

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.

Whenever schools establish a peer support system to provide support for students, peers 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 as circumstances dictate:

1. Notifying law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.
2. Immediately securing medical treatment and/or mental health services.
3. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contact and has the opportunity to intervene.
4. Administration shall remove other students from the immediate area as soon as possible.

The principal, counselor, or principal's designee shall document the incident in writing, including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat.

Parent Notification

In situations when a student is assessed at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt, the student's parent or guardian will be informed as soon as practicable by the principal, administrative designee, counselor, or mental health professional.

For any student returning to school after a suicide attempt or hospitalization for suicidal ideation, re-entry to school must begin with a re-entry meeting to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

Postvention

In the event that a student dies by suicide, the President/CEO, Administrator or designee will enact the crisis protocol. In accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the President/CEO or designee shall consult with the parents/guardians regarding facts that may be divulged to other students, parents/guardians, and staff.

To avoid a suicide "contagion effect", the Student Support Team shall closely monitor and provide any necessary follow up to students who may be at a higher risk of post-suicide emulation.

The school should not create or sanction memorials. School should not be canceled for the funeral. Refer to the crisis management protocol for procedures regarding the death of a student.