

Lewis Center for Educational Research

AR 5141.52: STUDENTS SUICIDE PREVENTION

Adopted: December 10, 2018

Revised: November 7, 2022

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.

In compliance with Education Code section 215, the below has been developed in consultation with LCER and community stakeholders, LCER employed mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses), administrators, other school staff members, parents/guardians/caregivers, students, local health agencies and professionals, the county mental health plan, law enforcement, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating LCER’s strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. LCER must work in conjunction with local government agencies, community-based organizations, and other community supports to identify additional resources.

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, LCER shall appoint an individual (or team) to serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for LCER. The suicide prevention point of contact for LCER and the President/CEO or designee shall ensure proper coordination and consultation with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary. This policy shall be reviewed and revised as indicated, at least annually in conjunction with the previously mentioned community stakeholders.

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

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Employees of LCER must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting. In addition, treatment of the mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide.

Intervention

LCER designates the following administrators to act as the primary and secondary suicide prevention liaisons **at each school site**:

1. Director of Student Support Services
2. Principal

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 suicide prevention liaison 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 contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
4. Administration shall remove other students from the immediate area as soon as possible.

The suicide prevention liaison 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 on campus or at a school-related activity, the suicide prevention liaison shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one or more of the following, as appropriate:
 - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred.
 - b. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Remaining calm, keeping in mind the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed.
 - e. Moving all other students out of the immediate area.
 - f. Not sending the student away or leaving him/her alone, even to go to the restroom.
 - g. Providing comfort to the student, listening and allowing the student to talk and being comfortable with moments of silence.
 - h. Promising privacy and help, but not promising confidentiality.
2. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.
3. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed and coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medical beneficiary.
4. After a referral is made, LCER shall verify with the parent/guardian that the follow up treatment has been accessed. Parents/guardians will be required to provide documentation of care for the student. If parents/guardians refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the suicide prevention liaisons shall meet with the parent to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural

stigma, financial issues) and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of care. If follow up care is still not provided, LCER may contact Child Protective Services.

5. Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who are directly or indirectly involved with the incident at LCER.
6. Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on the LCER campus, the suicide prevention liaison shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in LCER's safety plan. After consultation with the Principal or designee and the student's parent/guardian about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. LCER staff may receive assistance from LCER counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted off the LCER campus and unrelated to school activities, the Principal or designee shall take the following steps to support the student:

1. Contact the parent/guardian and offer support to the family.
2. Discuss with the family how they would like LCER to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students.
3. Obtain permission from the parent/guardian to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis are correct.
4. The suicide prevention liaisons shall handle any media requests.
5. Provide care and determine appropriate support to affected students.
6. Offer to the student and parent/guardian steps for re-integration to school. Re-integration may include obtaining a written release from the parent/guardian to speak with any health care providers; conferring with the student and parent/guardian about any specific requests on how to handle the situation; informing the student's teachers about possible days of absences; allowing accommodations for make-up work (being understanding that missed assignments may add stress to the student); appropriate staff maintaining ongoing contact with the student to monitor the student's actions and mood; and working with the parent/guardian to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

Parent Notification, and Caregivers Participation and Education

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 suicide prevention liaison.

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.

This Suicide Prevention Policy shall be easily accessible and prominently displayed on the LCER Web page . Parents/guardians/caregivers should be invited to provide input on the development and implementation of this policy.

Parents/guardians/caregivers may be included in suicide prevention efforts. At a minimum, the LCER shall share this Policy with parents/guardians/caregivers by notifying them where a complete copy of the policy is available.

All parents/guardians/caregivers may have access to suicide prevention training that addresses the following:

- Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors.
- How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide.
- How to respond appropriately to the student who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and referral for an immediate suicide risk assessment.

Student Participation and Education

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, LCER along with its partners has carefully reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide. Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with LCER and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

LCER's instructional and student support program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience. The instruction shall not use the stress model to explain suicide.

LCER's instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed. If suicide prevention is included in the LCER's instructional curriculum, it shall consider the grade level and age of the students and be delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. Under the supervision of an appropriately trained individual acting within the scope of her/his credential or license, students shall:

1. Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress. The content of the education may include:
 - a. Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma.
 - b. How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others.
 - c. Help-seeking strategies for oneself and others, including how to engage school-based and community resources and refer peers for help.
 - d. Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
2. Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding LCER's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

Student-focused suicide prevention education can be incorporated into classroom curricula (e.g., health classes, orientation classes, science, and physical education).

LCER will support the creation and implementation of programs and/or activities on campus that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Week, Peer Counseling, Freshman Success, and National Alliance on Mental Illness on Campus High School Clubs).

Postvention

A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on the school community, including students and staff. LCER shall follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide death, which incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

The suicide prevention liaison shall:

1. Coordinate with the President/CEO to:
 - a. Confirm death and cause.
 - b. Identify a staff member to contact deceased's family (within 24 hours).
 - c. Enact the Suicide Postvention Response.
 - d. Notify all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).
2. Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:
 - a. Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death.
 - b. Emotional support and resources available to staff.
 - c. Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services (if this is the protocol that is decided by administration).
 - d. Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.
3. Prepare staff to respond to needs of students regarding the following:
 - a. Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment.
 - b. Talking points for staff to notify students.
 - c. Resources available to students (on and off campus).
4. Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior. 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.
5. Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior.
6. Communicate with the larger school community about the suicide death.
7. Consider funeral arrangements for family and school community.
8. Respond to memorial requests in respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered.
9. Identify media spokesperson if needed.

10. Include long-term suicide postvention responses:

- a. Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant event) and how these will be addressed.
- b. Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased.
- c. Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide.

11. 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.

Student Identification Cards

LCER will include ALL of the following telephone number on all student identification cards:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)
- Suicide Crisis Lifeline, which can be accessed by calling or texting “988”
- National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233)
- Crisis Text Line, which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741
- Local suicide prevention hotline