



APPROVED

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER SCHOOLS SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

The Governing Board of Environmental Charter Schools (ECS) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Executive Director or designee shall develop preventive strategies and intervention procedures.

The policy has been developed in consultation with ECS and community stakeholders, ECS-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts and shall, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Prevention and Instruction

Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

ECS's programs 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 Executive Director or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information that describes ECS's social-emotional development programming, the severity of the youth suicide problem, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be designed to help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training shall be offered under the discretion of the Principal or Board of Directors, under the direction of a school Counselor and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies and may include information on:

1. Research identifying risk factors, such as previous suicide attempt(s), history of depression or mental illness, substance use problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stress or loss, family instability, and other factors
2. Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in students' appearance, personality, or behavior



3. Research-based instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health
4. School and community resources and services
5. School procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide
6. Materials approved by ECS for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the ECS site and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.
7. Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review or suitable suicide prevention materials.

Intervention and Emergency Procedures

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they shall promptly notify the principal and school counselor. The principal or designee shall then notify the student's parents/guardians as soon as possible and may refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Principal or designee shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
 - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred;
 - b. Securing Psychological Evaluation Team (PET), 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.
2. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, for example the counselor, advisor, Principal, and/or the student's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.
3. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.
4. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed.
5. After a referral is made, school shall verify with the parent/guardian that the follow up treatment has been accessed. 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, principal or designee 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, school may contact Department of Child and Family Services.

6. 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.
7. 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 an ECS school campus, the Principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in school'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. 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 students.

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. Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall complete the suicide prevention curriculum, including identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior and referral of a suicidal student to appropriate adults.

ECS Employees Acting Within Scope

Schools shall ensure that employees act only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging an ECS school employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

Instruction

Instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed, taking into consideration the grade level and age of the students. If offered or included in instructional curriculum, suicide prevention instruction shall be designed to help students:



1. 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.
2. Identify alternatives to suicide and develop coping and resiliency skills.
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, and/or community crisis intervention resources where youth, including those at high risk, such as youth bereaved by suicide; youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders; youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, gender identity, or other support services.

RESOURCES

CDE Suggested Publications:

[Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Schools](#)

[Fact Sheets on Suicide: Adolescents and Young Adults](#)

[Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide](#)

[School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide](#) or Made Serious Suicidal Threats is a guide that will assist in school reentry for students after an attempted suicide.

CDE Suggested Resources

[American Association of Suicidology](#) 

Provides general guidelines for a school-based suicide prevention program, outlining the necessary components of a comprehensive school-based program including a sample curriculum. This Web site also contains information about evidence-based programs for suicide prevention.

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#) 

The AFSP is the leading national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy, and to reaching out to people with mental disorders and those impacted by suicide.

[California Healthy Kids Resource Center](#) 

Contains peer-reviewed research-based programs, videos, and books on suicide prevention and intervention. To access these materials, click on "Health Education Library" and use the keyword "suicide." These materials can be borrowed from the resource center for four weeks with free delivery anywhere in California.



[California Mental Health Services Authority \(CalMHSA\)](#)

The CalMHSA is an independent administration and fiscal government agency focused on the efficient delivery of California mental health projects. Member counties work together to develop, fund and implement mental health services, projects and educational programs at the state, regional and local levels.

[Center for Mental Health in Schools-Mental Health Project](#)

The Center for Mental Health in Schools-Mental Health Project at the University of California, Los Angeles is a thorough resource for school interventions aimed at preventing suicide. It includes training on causes of suicide, data and statistics, assessing suicide risk, intervention planning and training, suicide aftermath assistance and prevention of copycat suicides, as well as other resources and contacts.

[Dougy Center](#)

The Dougy Center, National Center for Grieving Children and Families provides support and training locally, nationally, and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children and teens in grief from loss, including suicide.

[Jason Foundation, Inc.](#)

The Jason Foundation, Inc. is a nationally recognized leader in youth suicide awareness and prevention. The Web site contains a wide range of informative, educational materials and programs available to parents, teachers, youth workers, and others who are concerned about youth suicide.

[Know the Signs](#)

Know the Signs is a statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign built on three key messages: Know the Signs. Find the Words. Reach Out. This campaign is intended to educate Californians on how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to find the words to have a direct conversation with someone in crisis and where to find professional help and resources.

[Kognito](#)

At-Risk for Middle School Educators and At-Risk for High School Educators are research-proven online gatekeeper training simulations designed to prepare teachers, administrators and staff to recognize when a student is exhibiting signs of psychological distress, and manage a conversation with the student with the goal of connecting them to the appropriate support.

[Mental Health Services Act](#)

The passage of Proposition 63 (now known as the Mental Health Services Act) provides the first opportunity in many years for the California Department of Mental Health to provide increased funding, personnel and other resources to support county mental health programs and monitor progress toward statewide goals for children, transition age youth, adults, older adults and families.

[My3App](#)

My3App is a mobile application designed to help those who may be having thoughts of suicide, or who have a history of suicidal behavior stay safe when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide.



[National Center for Suicide Prevention Training](#)

The National Center for Suicide Prevention Training provides educational resources to assist public officials, service providers, and community-based coalitions develop effective suicide prevention programs and policies. It includes facilitated and self-paced on-line workshops that provide training on suicide prevention.

[National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#)

The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention provides a framework for suicide prevention efforts across the county. Building on the work of the Surgeon General's Call to Action, this resource provides data about suicide, as well as information about suicide prevention efforts throughout the nation. Information about California's suicide prevention activities can be found by clicking on "Federal, State and private activities" and selecting from the drop down menu under "Prevention Programs."

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) California](#)

NAMI California is a grass roots organization of families and individuals whose lives have been affected by serious mental illness. NAMI provides leadership in legislation, policy development, education and support throughout California.

[National Institute on Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

NIMH envisions a world in which mental illnesses are prevented and cured. The mission of NIMH is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness through basic and clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

[Signs of Suicide \(SOS\) - Youth Programs](#)

The Screening for Mental Health's SOS Suicide Prevention Program is a school-based suicide prevention program targeting. The program educates teens in recognizing the signs of suicide and outlines action steps for dealing with this mental health emergency. The National Association of Schools Psychologists and many other national associations endorse SOS.

[The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide](#)

This resource provides practical information about youth suicide prevention that is relevant to schools, parents, and students. This national, nonprofit organization increases awareness about both the problem of youth suicide and increases accessibility to user-friendly resources available to prevent it.

[Surgeon General's Call to Action, 1999](#)

This report promotes awareness and intervention for suicide and its risk factor and includes a section dedicated to suicide issues and facts among young people.

[Suicide Prevention Hotline](#)

This free and confidential telephone service is open 24 hours a day with counselors available to talk about thoughts of suicide or concerns about someone who may be suicidal.

[Trevor Project - Ask for Help](#)

This public service announcement campaign features empowering, first-person accounts of youth reaching out to friends, parents or counselors to promote the idea that it's ok to ask for help when you need it.



[Walk in Our Shoes](#)

This campaign utilizes real stories from teens and young adults to teach youth about mental health challenges and mental wellness. The multifaceted campaign uses positive, authentic, and appropriate stories told through an interactive Web site, school-based theatrical performance, and a statewide public education campaign.

[Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program](#)

Part of the Light for Life Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to awareness, education, and collaboration for suicide prevention. There is a cost for Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Training and to form local chapters.

[Youth Suicide Prevention Programs: A Resource Guide](#)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's guide which includes eight different suicide prevention strategies including school gatekeeper training, community gatekeeper training, general suicide education, screening programs, peer support programs, crisis centers and hotlines, suicide restriction methods, and postvention. Although it was created in 1992, the site remains relevant.