

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Instruction

At all secondary grades, the Monterey County Office of Education's (MCOE) 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 can get help and recognize that there is no stigma associated with seeking mental health, substance abuse, and/or suicide prevention services

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)
(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)
(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)
(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)
(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training for staff shall be provided to help staff identify and respond to students at risk of suicide on an annual basis. The training shall be offered under the direction of a MCOE counselor/psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies. The training 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 stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)
(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

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

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

5. Procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to commit suicide

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)

(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)

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; 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 youth
2. 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

(cf. 5131.6 - Alcohol and Other Drugs)

3. 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
4. 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
5. Instructional strategies for teaching the suicide prevention curriculum and promoting mental and emotional health
6. School and community resources and services, including resources and services that meet the specific needs of high-risk groups

(cf. 5141.6 - School Health Services)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

7. MCOE 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 intentions.

Although any personal information that a student discloses to a school counselor shall generally not be revealed, released, referenced, or discussed with third parties, the counselor may report to the principal or student'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 student. In addition, the counselor may disclose information of a personal nature to psychotherapists, other health care providers, social workers or the school nurse for the sole purpose of referring the student for treatment. (Education Code 49602)

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

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. (Education Code 215)

Whenever schools establish a peer counseling system to provide support for students, peer counselors shall receive training that includes identification of the warning signs of suicidal behavior, referral processes for suicidal students to appropriate adults and confidentiality guidelines.

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, he/she shall promptly notify the principal and/or department head. The principal and/or department head 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. In addition, staff members are considered "Mandated Reporters". If a staff member has reasonable suspicion that a student might be contemplating suicide, they are required to report their suspicion to the Monterey County Department of Social Services and/or the local police department when a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the department head, principal, or designee shall:

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 by calling 911 or the Behavioral Health Crisis Line for Monterey County (831)-755-4111
- 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. Removing other students from the immediate area as soon as possible

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 5141 - Health Care and Emergencies)

2. Document the incident in writing including the steps that the school took in response to the suicide attempt or threat as soon as feasible and submit to immediate supervisor

(cf. 5125 - Student Records)

3. Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed. In addition, staff will secure age appropriate support for any siblings attending school or enrolled in MCOE programs (i.e. Head Start/Early Head Start, Migrant, etc.)
4. 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 the school
5. 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 that a suicide occurs or is attempted on MCOE owned or leased property, the department head, principal or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in the school safety plan. After consultation with the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools or designee and the student's parents/guardians about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the department head, principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. MCOE staff may receive assistance from counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or

attempted suicide with students.

(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)

(cf. 1112- Media Relations)

Postvention

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

The Superintendent or designee shall implement procedures to address students' and staff's grief and to minimize the risk of imitative suicide or suicide contagion. He/she shall 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.

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

(cf. 1112- Media Relations)

After any suicide or attempted suicide by a student, the Superintendent 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.

Approved: 03/05/18