

# **IEM School Suicide Prevention & Intervention Policy 2020-2021**

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# IEM Schools Suicide Prevention and Intervention Policy

Modeled from

[Trevor Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)

## Purpose

The purpose of the created policy will be to protect the health and wellbeing of all students in grades k-12 by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide.

The school recognizes that:

- (a) Physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes
- (b) Suicide is a leading cause of death among young people
- (c) Our organization has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide, and
- (d) The school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development

The policy is meant to be paired with other procedures and support systems for the emotional and behavioral health of students more broadly. To ensure the safety of our students and be able to respond to a student in crisis, the school will contact the Mental Health Coordinator. (Job Description [Mental Health Coordinator](#)).

## Scope and Distribution

The scope of this policy will include all classes taught by our school personnel, (in person or online), group Educational Activities, Learning Record meetings or any other interactions with students and our school staff.

The policy will be distributed annually to all school employees and the links to it will be included in the ES Manual, Parent Manual, High School Manual and on the school website. Each of these sources will include crisis numbers and steps to take if a student exhibiting signs of suicidality.

## Implementation

Director of Special Education shall be responsible for planning and overseeing this policy in conjunction with the Mental Health Coordinator.

# Prevention

## 1. Staff Professional Development

Policies and procedures will be written and provided to all staff by the first week of school each year and announced at the All Educational Specialist Training day. Staff will complete an online training module annually.

This training will include how to respond to crisis situations within the context of our school:

- High-risk groups
- Risk factors
- Warning signs
- Protective factors
- How to talk to children in an age-appropriate way for elementary, middle and high school students
- When to treat as a crisis and call 911 or ask a parent to take to the emergency room
- When to ask help from a Mental Health Professional
- Who to refer to
- How to document the process

Additional professional development will be provided to **Advisors** about risk assessment and crisis intervention for students grades k-12.

## 2. Youth Suicide Prevention Education for Students and Parents

### Student Education:

All IEM schools will provide grade-appropriate mental health curriculum options for grades K-12. Suicide prevention units will be created and made available to all middle and high school students that could be included in a variety of life skills and special interest courses.

- The importance of safe and healthy choices and coping strategies
- How to recognize risk factors and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide in oneself and others
- Help-seeking strategies for oneself or others, including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help.

Parents will be provided with options for age-appropriate mental health curriculum. All parents will be informed of this curriculum and given the opportunity to participate if they so choose.

### Parent Education

IEM schools will provide parent instruction on youth mental health. This will include webinars put on by the school staff Mental Health Professionals or other experts on youth mental health.

Each year families will receive a resource document on a listserv about assisting youth in becoming socio-emotionally healthy and resources for mental health and suicide prevention/intervention.

This will also include a reminder of resources on the school website and in the parent and high school manuals sent out twice a year.

### 3. Publication and Distribution

This policy will be distributed annually to parents and students in the Parent Manual, the High School Manual on the school website. It will be included in the ES manual for K-12 options. All student ID cards will have the suicide hotline number on printed on the back.

The school website will provide links for:

- 24-hour crisis hotlines
- Links to resources giving specific information for mental health needs.
- Steps to take if a student is exhibiting alarming warning signs of suicide (i.e. agitation, intoxication, suicide threat with a plan, access to means, etc.)
- Socioemotional resources listed by county
- How to contact the Mental Health Coordinator and how to access to community mental health resources

## Assessment & Referral

### Suicidality Without Parent Present:

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, ( i.e., verbalizes suicidality, presents overt warning signs, or a student self-refers) and no parent is present, the school **Mental Health Coordinator** (credentialed school counselor) or Designee will assist the student and adult staff member who is with the student. The **Mental Health Coordinator will be listed on the school website along with contact information.**

The steps delineated in the [Protocol for Responding to Students at Risk of Suicide](#) will be followed.

### Suicidality With Parent Knowledge/Presence

#### **If Parent or guardian is present or if a parent expresses a suicide risk concern to a school employee about a potential suicide risk:**

1. School staff will advise parents to continuously supervise the student & restrict access to lethal means to ensure their safety.
2. Parents will also be informed that the Mental Health Coordinator will be calling them to help with resources and referrals.
3. **Mental Health Coordinator** will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible. She will call and email the family to provide the family with the following:
  - Crisis phone numbers
  - Appointment with IEM School Mental Health Professional for assistance with referrals
  - [Suicide Safety Parent Information Packet](#) and mental health resources in the county in which the family resides
4. Upon parent request, the Mental Health Coordinator can complete a Preliminary Suicide Risk Screening Tool and the Suicide Screening Checklist in order to best assist the family with a referral to community resources. When appropriate, referral may include: County Crisis Suicide Prevention

Center, Mobile Crisis Team, Emergency Services or bringing the student to the local Emergency Department, but in most cases will involve setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider. The Mental Health Coordinator will assist with this decision.

6. Staff will follow up within 24 hours of talking to a parent.

7. Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss student's mental health with outside care, when appropriate.

8. Hard copies of signed documents will remain confidential.

### **For At-Risk Students Not Demonstrating Signs of Current Suicidality:**

If a student is showing signs of significant risk for suicide but not voicing suicidality, the family will be given the phone number of the Mental Health Coordinator. The concern may come from actions or statements showing that they are at risk and/or from evidence in student work (essays/poems/art etc.) If the parent calls the Mental Health Coordinator, the parent will be given a suicide information packet and will be made aware of mental health resources in the county in which the family resides and information about how to access care using medical insurance or Medical.

## **In-School Suicide Attempts**

If a suicide attempt is made at a field trip or other school function, the health and safety of the student is paramount.

In these situations:

1. If an attempt has been made or there is an immediate danger to the student or others present, staff will call 911 immediately.
2. First aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be received.
3. School staff will supervise the student to ensure the safety of the student.
4. Staff will move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
5. Staff will immediately contact the Mental Health Coordinator
6. Mental Health Coordinator will inform the parent or guardian as described in [Protocol for Responding to Students at Risk of Suicide](#).
7. Mental Health Coordinator will refer as necessary to another Mental Health Professional to assess whether additional steps should be taken to ensure student's long-term safety and well-being.

If a staff member becomes aware of a suicide attempt by a student that is in progress but not associated with a school event, the staff member will:

- Inform the Advisor, who will consult with Mental Health Coordinator.
- Advisor will inform the student's parent or guardian.
- Call the police and/or emergency medical services, such as 911 if appropriate.

If the student contacts the staff member and expresses suicidal ideation, the staff member should maintain in contact with the student (either in person, online, or on the phone). The staff member should then enlist the assistance of an Advisor and/or Mental Health Coordinator to contact the parent and/or 911 while maintaining verbal engagement with the student.

## **Parental Notification and Involvement**

When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, i.e., verbalizes suicidality, presents overt warning signs, or a student self-refers, the school Suicide Crisis Team will assist the student and adult who is with the student. The parent will be immediately notified according to the steps delineated in the [Protocol for Responding to Students at Risk of Suicide](#).

The staff member will remain with the student or leave the student under the close supervision of the parent or guardian. Staff will also communicate with **The California Youth Crisis Line:** 1-800-843-5200 or other outside mental health care providers regarding the situation if needed. The school staff should remain with the student until a parent, Emergency Services Professional, or Mental Health Professional arrives. The Mental Health Coordinator will work with the family to assist them in getting their mental health needs met in the community through the family's health insurance or through Medi-Cal and facilitate referrals as needed.

## **School Resumption Procedure**

For students returning to school or enrolling in our school after a known mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), a school employed mental health professional or designee will meet with the student's parent or guardian, ES, and if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss enrollment or school resumption and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to schoolwork.

1. The Mental Health Coordinator or other designee will be identified to coordinate with the student, their parent or guardian, the ES, Advisor, Guidance Coordinator, and any outside mental health care providers, if applicable.
2. The parent will be advised to seek outside Mental Health assistance and will be given referral resources to facilitate access to community care via medical insurance and/or Medi-Cal.

## **Post Intervention**

### **Post Suicide Action Plan**

Once the school receives word that a student has committed suicide there will be an immediate online/phone meeting with the person who heard of the suicide, the ES, the ES's advisor and a school mental health professional. At this meeting, the following will be determined:

- How and when the ES will contact the parents (unless the way the school found out was a call from the parent to the ES). The ES and/or advisor will offer support to the family. The ES and/or advisor or Mental Health Coordinator will also ascertain how the school can best assist the family.

The Mental Health Coordinator and the team will also determine:

- What staff needs to be contacted, who will contact them, and what information will be offered.
- Who will take questions from the press if we are called.
- How to handle calls from other families.
- Who will contact community mental health resources for referral for families and students
- How and if to offer grief support to students/siblings and who to refer them to