

Sebastopol Independent Charter School

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

BP 5141.52

The Board of Directors of Sebastopol Independent Charter School (“SICS”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Board of Directors has developed prevention strategies and intervention procedures.

The policy has been developed in consultation with SICS and community stakeholders, applicable SICS-employed 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 SICS and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

SICS’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 Executive Director or designee may offer parents/guardians education or information which describes the severity of the youth suicide problem, SICS’s suicide prevention efforts, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and/or SICS and community resources that can help youth in crisis.

SICS’s instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed, taking into consideration the grade level and age of the students. Measures and strategies for students in grades K-6 will be age appropriate and delivered in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. If offered or included in SICS’s 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, SICS 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.

If issued, student identification cards for students in grades 7-8 shall include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline telephone number and may also include the Crisis Text Line and/or a local suicide prevention hotline telephone number.

Staff Development

Suicide prevention training for staff will be provided and be designed to help staff identify and find help for students at risk of suicide. The training may be offered under the discretion of the Executive Director and/or Board of Directors 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 abuse problems, family history of suicide or violence, feelings of isolation, interpersonal conflicts, a recent severe stressor or loss, family instability, and other factors, and the higher risk of suicide among certain groups, including, but not limited to, students who are impacted 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.
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. SICS and community resources and services for students and families in crisis and ways to access them.
5. SICS procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens, or discloses the desire to die by suicide.
6. Materials approved by SICS for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the SICS 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, he/she shall promptly notify the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director or designee shall then notify the student's parent/guardian as soon as possible and may also refer the student to mental health resources at SICS or in the community.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Executive Director 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 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 SICS counselor, psychologist, nurse, Executive Director, 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. 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 SICS.
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.
7. If a referral is made for mental health or related services for a student in grades K-6 who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, the Executive Director or designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on the SICS campus, the Executive Director or designee shall follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in SICS's safety plan. After consultation with the Executive Director 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 Executive Director or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. SICS staff may receive assistance from SICS counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss the suicide or attempted suicide with students.

Students shall be encouraged through the education program and in SICS activities to notify a teacher, Executive Director, another SICS administrator, psychologist, SICS counselor, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

SICS Employees Acting Within Scope

SICS 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 a SICS employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

Review

The Board of Directors shall review, and update as necessary, this policy at least every five years.

Posting

The Executive Director or designee shall post this policy on the SICS website in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students.

Adopted: 2017.06.19

Revised: 2020.12.07