

**ABLE Board Policy
Students and Assistance**

Suicide Prevention Policy

In accordance with California *Education Code* Section 215, this policy helps address the needs of high-risk groups who may encounter a mental health crisis, by implementing a suicide prevention plan including training for teachers of ABLE Charter Schools (ABLE) and guidance to help ensure that school employees act within the authorization and scope of their credentials or licenses.

Overall Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention

This strategic plan is based on input from 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, law enforcement, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. ABLE works in conjunction with local government agencies, community-based organizations, Family Resources and Referral Center of Stockton, ABLE Community Council, and ABLE Crisis Prevention Team to invite suggestions for improving ways to prevent youth suicide.

To ensure this policy regarding suicide prevention is properly adopted, implemented, and updated, the Head Counselor serves as the suicide prevention point of contact. In addition, the School Nurse serves as the liaison to the suicide prevention point of contact and helps implement suicide prevention activities. This policy is reviewed and revised, at least annually, with input from the above mentioned community stakeholders.

I. Prevention

A. Messaging about Suicide Prevention

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, ABLE Charter School, along with its partners, review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide.

For a resource on public messaging about suicide prevention, see the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Web site at:

<http://suicidepreventionmessaging.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/>

B. Suicide Prevention Training and Education

ABLE reviews available staff training to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention. Training is provided for all school staff members.

Training:

- At least annually, all staff receive training on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, suicide prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention. At a minimum, all staff participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention).
- All suicide prevention trainings are offered under the direction of school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, or social workers) who have received advanced training specific to suicide and may benefit from collaboration with one or more county and/or community mental health agencies. Staff training may be adjusted year-to-year based on previous professional development activities and emerging best practices.

Specialized Staff Training:

- Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention is provided to mental health professionals (school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses) employed by ABLE.

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services:

- Employees of ABLE 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 the school is able to provide.

For a resource concerning training, the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) provides a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to young people showing signs of a mental illness or in a crisis, and to connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care. YMHFA is an 8-hour interactive training for youth-serving adults without a mental health background. See the Mental Health First Aid Web page at:

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course-types/youth/>

C. Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Participation and Education

- To the extent possible, parents/guardians/caregivers are included in all suicide prevention efforts of ABLE.
- This suicide prevention policy is displayed on the ABLE Charter School Web page at www.ablecharter.com and a copy is available upon request.

As a resource, see *Parents as Partners: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents* which is a booklet containing useful information for parents/guardians/caregivers who are concerned that their children may be at risk for suicide. It is available from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE). See the SAVE Web page at:

<https://www.save.org/product/parents-as-partners/>

D. Student Participation and Education

ABLE reviews available student curricula to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

ABLE supports 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 Weeks, Peer Counseling Programs)

Under the supervision of school-employed mental health professionals, and following consultation with county and community mental health agencies, students:

- Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress;
- Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

For a resource on student participation, see *More Than Sad* consisting of school-ready and evidence-based training material, listed on the National Suicide Prevention Resource Center's best practices list, specifically designed for teen-level suicide prevention. See the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Web page at:

<https://afsp.org/our-work/education/more-than-sad/>

II. Intervention, Assessment, and Referral

A. ABLE Staff

The Multi-Disciplinary Crisis Team members are trained in suicide intervention and are designated as the primary and secondary suicide prevention liaisons. Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they will promptly notify the primary designated suicide prevention liaisons. If the primary suicide prevention liaisons are unavailable, the staff will promptly notify a secondary suicide prevention liaison.

- The names and titles of ABLE's multi-disciplinary crisis team are listed below and available in person, on campus or by phone at (209) 478-1600, if requested, to all students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers:

PRIMARY LIAISONS

Stephanie Buenrostro
High School Counselor

Priscilla Huerta
High School Counselor

Christian Amezquita
Middle School Counselor

Susana Perez-Diaz
Middle School Counselor

Amitoj Kaur
Elementary School Counselor

SECONDARY LIAISONS

Kristine Ly
Health Assistant

Carla Cunha
Health Assistant

Damon Auchard
Director of Student Services

Brandi Martin
Elementary Principal

Julie Porta
Middle School Principal

Kerri Scroope
High School Principal

Jobie Torres
Engagement Specialist

Tamija Seabron
Engagement Specialist

Christrian Buenrostro
Engagement Specialist

Erick Whiteside
Engagement Specialist

Christian Pineda
Engagement Specialist

Erika Smith
Engagement Specialist

Michaela Toneto
Engagement Specialist

B. Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

When discussing the topic of suicide including any information and resources in this policy with a student, every parent/guardian/caregiver is encouraged to deliver information in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the child and appropriate for the child's age.

For parents/guardians/caregivers, ABLE student identification badges include helpful referral sources for students who may be experiencing a mental health crisis and/or suicidal thoughts.

C. Students

Students are encouraged to notify a staff member, teacher, or counselor when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's emotional distress, and suicidal ideation or attempts.

D. Parental Notification and Involvement

ABLE helps ensure continuing care for a student identified to be at risk of suicide. The following steps are recommended to ensure continuity of care:

- A member of the multi-disciplinary crisis team will notify, if appropriate and in the best interest of the student, the student's parents/guardians/caregivers as soon as possible and will refer the student to mental health resources in the school or community. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers follows a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.
- After a referral is made for a student, school staff will verify with the parent/guardian/caregiver that follow-up treatment has been accessed. Parents/guardians/caregivers will be required to provide documentation of care for the student.
- If parents/guardians/caregivers 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 point of contact (or other appropriate school staff member) will meet with the parents/guardians/caregivers to identify barriers to treatment

(e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues) and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of the importance of care. If follow-up care for the student is still not provided, school staff should consider contacting Child Protective Services (CPS) to report neglect of the youth (209-468-1330).

III. Supporting Students after a Mental Health Crisis

Steps will be taken to help provide the mental health support for the student and to monitor their actions for any signs of suicide. Guidance for staff is provided in the Internal Protocol for Responding to Suicidal Ideation. In addition to the Internal Protocol for Responding to Suicidal Ideation, the following action plans provide additional guidance to follow after the crisis has happened:

A. Action Plan for In-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt is made during the school day on campus, it is important to remember that the health and safety of the student and those around him/her are critical. The following steps will be taken:

- Immediately contact the grade-level principal and suicide prevention liaison;
- Call 911 and give them as much information about any suicide note, medications taken, and access to weapons, if applicable;
- Contact the parent/guardian/caregiver as soon as possible;
- Release the student only to the parent/guardian/caregiver when the suicide prevention liaison or appropriate authority deems it in the best interest of the student.
- If parent/guardian/caregiver is unavailable, call 911 or a medical provider such as a hospital emergency room or the student's therapist.

B. Action Plan for Out-of-School Suicide Attempts

If a suicide attempt by a student is outside of ABLE school property, ABLE will protect the privacy of the student and maintain a confidential record of the actions taken to intervene, support, and protect the student. The following steps will be taken:

- Contact the parent/guardian/caregiver and offer support to the family;
- Offer to the student and parent/guardian/caregiver steps for re-integration to school.

C. Action Plan for Re-Entry to School After a Suicide Attempt

A student who threatened or attempted suicide is at a higher risk for suicide in the months following the crisis. Involving students in planning for their return to school provides them with a sense of control, personal responsibility, and empowerment.

The following steps will be taken upon re-entry to school:

- Prior to returning to school, a re-entry meeting must be held with student, parent/guardian/caregiver, and a member of the crisis team.
- Obtain a written release of information signed by parents/guardians/caregivers and providers;
- Confer with student and parents/guardians/caregivers about any specific requests on how to handle the situation;
- Inform the student's teachers about possible days of absences;
- Allow accommodations for student to make up work (be understanding that missed assignments may add stress to student);
- Mental health professionals or trusted staff members should maintain ongoing contact to monitor student's actions and mood;
- Work with parents/guardians/caregivers to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

As a resource, please refer to *The School Reentry for a Student Who Has Attempted Suicide or Made Serious Suicidal Threats*. This guidebook assists in school re-entry for students after an attempted suicide. See the Mental Health Recovery Services Resource Web page at:

http://www.mhrsonline.org/resources/suicide%5Cattempted_suicide_resources_for_schools-9/

IV. Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

The grade-level principal will follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide death.

Suicide Postvention Response Plan

- Immediate Initial Steps
 - Staff member to confirm death and cause;
 - Identify a staff member to contact deceased's family (within 24 hours); and
 - Conduct a meeting of the multi-disciplinary crisis response team to discuss and implement steps to carry out this plan;
- Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:

- Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death;
 - Emotional support and resources available to staff;
 - Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services (if administration feels it to be appropriate); and
 - Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.
- Prepare staff to respond to needs of students regarding the following:
 - Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment;
 - Talking points for staff to notify students; and
 - Resources available to students (on and off campus) and, if the student is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, contact information for the county mental health plan.
 - Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior; and identify and arrange for staff to meet with these students individually or in a group setting.
 - Communicate with the larger school community about the suicide death.
 - Identify media spokesperson skilled to cover story without the use of explicit, graphic, or dramatic content (go to the Reporting on Suicide.Org Web site at www.reportingonsuicide.org).
 - Utilize and respond to social media outlets:
 - Identify what platforms students are using to respond to suicide death; and
 - Identify/train staff and students to monitor social media outlets;
 - Provide long-term suicide postvention responses:
 - Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased; and
 - Suicide prevention guidance lessons for all students

For a resource, refer to *After a Suicide: A Toolkit for School* which is a comprehensive guide to assist schools on what to do if a suicide death takes place in the school community and available on the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at:

<http://www.sprc.org/comprehensive-approach/postvention>

Policy Revised and Adopted: September 6, 2023

Policy References: Education Code section 215, Additional Resources (Below), and ABLÉ Internal Protocols for Responding to Suicidal Ideation

Additional Resources

1. ABLÉ Internal Protocols for Responding to Suicidal Ideation (Available from Academic Counselor)

2. Prevention/Intervention

- San Joaquin Mental Health Crisis- 209.468.8686 1212
N. California Street, Stockton, CA 95202
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline -1.800.273.8255 (TALK)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- The Crisis Text Line which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741.
- The Trevor Lifeline 1.866.488.7386
www.thetrevorproject.org
- *Help & Hope for Survivors of Suicide Loss* is a guide to help those during the bereavement process and who were greatly affected by the death of a suicide. See the Suicide Prevention Resource Center Web page at: <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/help-hope-survivors-suicide-loss>
- For additional information on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, see the Mental Health Recovery Services Model Protocol Web page at: <http://www.mhrsonline.org/resources/suicide%CAattempted> suicide resources for schools-9/
- For information on how to use social media for suicide prevention, see the Your Voice Counts Web page at: <http://resource-center.yourvoicecounts.org/content/how-use-social-media>

3. Training

- Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) is a gatekeeper training that can be taught online. Just as people trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the Heimlich Maneuver help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. See the QPR Web site at <http://www.qprinstitute.com/>
- Coping and Support Training (CAST) is an evidence-based life-skills training and social support program to help at-risk youth. See the Reconnecting Youth Inc. Web page at <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/programs/cast/>
- Students Mobilizing Awareness and Reducing Tragedies (SMART) is a program comprised of student-led groups in high schools designed to give students the freedom to implement a suicide prevention on their campus that best fits their school's needs. See the SAVE Web page at <https://www.save.org/what-we-do/education/smart-schools-program-2/>