

# Novato Charter School

## Board Policy

### Suicide Prevention

#### Students

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and that school personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate referral and/or assistance. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Director or designee shall develop measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior.

This policy is based on research and best practices in suicide prevention, and has been adopted with the understanding that suicide prevention activities decrease suicide risk, increase help-seeking behavior, identify those at risk of suicide, and decrease suicidal behaviors. Empirical evidence refutes a common belief that talking about suicide can increase risk or “place the idea in someone’s mind.”

In developing measures and strategies for use by the district, the Director or designee may consult with school health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, administrators, other staff, parents/guardians, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations.

Such measures and strategies shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers and other school employees who interact with students in the secondary grades on an annual basis.
2. On an ongoing basis, instruction to students in problem-solving and coping skills to promote students' mental, emotional, and social health and well-being, as well as instruction in recognizing and appropriately responding to warning signs of suicidal intent in others.
3. Methods for promoting a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and that is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.
4. The provision of information to parents/guardians regarding protective factors, risk factors and warning signs of suicide, the severity of the youth suicide problem, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, and/or community resources that can help youth in crisis.
5. Encouragement for students to notify appropriate school personnel or other adults when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions.

6. Crisis intervention procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts.
7. Counseling and other postvention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope with student's suicide ideation, suicide attempt, or death suggested to be suicide.

As appropriate, these measures and strategies shall specifically address the needs of students who are at high risk of suicide, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide; students who have experienced traumatic events; 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; or local populations vulnerable to depression and suicide. (Education Code 215)

#### Management Resources:

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Health Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2003

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION PUBLICATIONS

School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PUBLICATIONS

Preventing Suicide, Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams, 2015

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PUBLICATIONS

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action, rev. 2012

#### WEB SITES

American Association of Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <http://afsp.org>

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org>

American School Counselor Association: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>

California Department of Education, Mental Health: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh>

California Department of Health Care Services, Suicide Prevention Program:

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/SuicidePrevention.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mental Health: <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>

National Association of School Psychologists: <http://www.nasponline.org>

National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Curriculum:

<https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>

National Institute for Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Trevor Project: <http://thetrevorproject.org>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

Palo Alto Unified School District Counseling Services Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Toolkit:

<https://www.pausd.org/student-services/counseling-services>

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for School by Suicide Prevention Resource Center:

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