

## WESTMORLAND UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### **Board Policy No. 5043: SUICIDE PREVENTION**

#### A. Introduction

The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a major 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. In order to attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, it is the purpose of this Policy to establish guidelines for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention as required by Education Code section 215. This policy corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

#### B. Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training

1. Suicide awareness and prevention training shall be provided to all teachers of 7th and 8th grade pupils. The training shall include information concerning the District's prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies and procedures. The training shall further include suicide awareness and prevention in groups of pupils at elevated risk for suicide, 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. Materials provided to training participants shall set forth how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at school and within the community, and when and how to refer pupils and their families to those services.
3. Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.
4. Completion of training identified in this Board Policy does not authorize District employees to diagnose or treat a mental illness. District employees may only act within the authorization and scope of their respective credential or license.

#### C. Intervention Strategies and Guidelines

1. Suicide prevention instruction shall be incorporated into the health education curriculum in the seventh and eighth grades. Suicide prevention strategies include efforts to promote a positive school climate enhancing students' feelings of connectedness with the school.

2. Students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade will receive age appropriate lessons in their classrooms through health education on the importance of safe and healthy choices, as well as help seeking strategies for self or others. Such instruction shall be aligned with state content standards and shall be designed to help students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.
3. Any staff member who is originally made aware of any suicide threat or witnesses any attempt towards self-harm will immediately notify the superintendent or their designee. Any threat in any form must be treated as real and dealt with immediately. No student should be left alone, nor confidences promised.
4. In the event a District employee suspects or has knowledge that a pupil is suicidal or has suicidal ideation, the District employee shall promptly report this to the superintendent or their designee. The superintendent shall then notify the pupil's parents/guardians as soon as possible and may refer the pupil to mental health resources in the school or community. If the situation is critical, the pupil may be referred to emergency services.
5. Pupils shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, Superintendent, school psychologist, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another pupil's suicidal intentions.
6. When a suicide attempt or threat is reported, the Superintendent or designee shall:
  - a. Ensure the pupil's physical safety by one of the following, as appropriate:
    - i. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred.
    - ii. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.
    - iii. Keeping the pupil under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
  - b. Designate specific individuals to be promptly contacted, including the school psychologist, superintendent, and/or the pupil's parent/guardian, and, as necessary, local law enforcement or mental health agencies.
  - c. Follow up with the parent/guardian and pupil in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed.
5. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the Superintendent or designee may develop additional measures and strategies for

suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. In developing such measures and strategies, the Superintendent 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.

D. Postvention Strategies and Guidelines

1. Following a suicide, suicide attempt, or suicide related trauma of a pupil, guidance counseling and mental health services shall be made available. Parents shall also be advised of guidance counseling and mental health services afforded by the school and community.
2. Following a suicide attempt of a pupil, the parents/guardians and appropriate personnel will meet to determine whether additional steps should be taken to ensure the pupil's continued safety on campus and discuss referrals to appropriate mental health services.

E. Policy Review

The District is required, at minimum, to review this policy every five years and if necessary, update its policy.

F. Student ID Cards

1. Effective January 1, 2019, all new student ID cards issued to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students shall have the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) printed on one side of the card. The District may (but is not required to) also include the Crisis Text Line (which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741) and a local suicide prevention hotline.

Legal Reference:

Education Code sections 215, 215.5

Date Policy Adopted By The Board: February 12, 2019