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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Connie Leyva, Chair

2019 - 2020 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1767 **Hearing Date:** June 26, 2019  
**Author:** Ramos  
**Version:** April 22, 2019  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Lynn Lorber

**Subject:** Pupil suicide prevention policies.

## SUMMARY

This bill requires the governing board or body of a local educational agency (LEA) that serves kindergarten and grades 1-6 to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the governing board or body of a LEA that serves grades 7-12 to adopt, at a regularly scheduled meeting, a policy on student suicide prevention. (Education Code § 215)
- 2) Requires the policy to be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. (EC § 215)
- 3) Requires the policy to, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. (EC § 215)
- 4) Requires LEAs and private schools serving grades 7-12 that issue student identification cards to have printed on either side of the cards the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and authorizes schools to have printed on cards the numbers for the Crisis Text Line and a local suicide prevention hotline. (EC § 215.5)
- 5) Requires a public or private institution of higher education that issues student identification cards to have printed on either side of the cards the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and authorized institution to have printed on cards the numbers for the Crisis Text Line, the campus police or security, and a local suicide prevention hotline number. (EC § 215.5)
- 6) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to identify one or more evidence-based online training programs to a LEA can use to train school staff and students as part of the LEA's policy on student suicide prevention. (EC § 216)
- 7) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to send a notice to each middle school, junior high school, and high school that encourages each school to

provide suicide prevention training to each school counselor at least one time while employed as a counselor, provides information on the availability of the suicide prevention training curriculum developed by the CDE, and informs schools about the suicide prevention training provided by CDE and describes how a school might retain those services. (EC § 49604)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires the governing board or body of a LEA that serves kindergarten and grades 1-6, before the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, to adopt, at a regularly scheduled meeting, a policy on student suicide prevention in kindergarten and grades 1-6.
- 2) Requires the policy to be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts.
- 3) Requires the policy to, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
- 4) Requires the policy to be age appropriate and be delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students.
- 5) Requires the policy to also address any training to be provided to teachers on suicide awareness and prevention.
- 6) Requires the governing board or body to review, at minimum every fifth year, its policy on student suicide prevention, and if necessary, update its policy.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “While the legislature has made significant strides on bullying, harassment, and suicide prevention, these issues remain significant challenges in schools across our state. Even as the issue of adolescent suicide has received focus and resources in recent years, rates of youth self-harm and suicide have tragically increased. While other resources are expansive to most age ranges, suicide prevention policies are grade-exclusive, only targeted at grades 7-12. These grade-exclusive policies can leave behind students whose risk of suicide has tragically increased in recent years. AB 1767 seeks to build on the work of local educational agencies by expanding suicide prevention policies to begin to address youth suicide. Doing so will focus attention on addressing the risk of youth suicide early on, hopefully preventing future youth suicide.”
- 2) ***Rates of suicide among young children.*** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- a) Suicide in the United States has increased in all age groups.
  - b) Suicide for children ages 5-12 in the United States is a growing problem, as 1,309 youth in this age group committed suicide from 1999-2015.
  - c) Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24, with nearly 4,600 lives lost each year.
  - d) In California in 2015, 495 youth ages 5-24 were known to have committed suicide.
- 3) **Expands to K-6.** Current law requires LEAs serving grades 7-12 to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention. This bill expands this requirement to LEAs serving kindergarten and grades 1-6, and mirrors existing provisions with the addition of a requirement for the K-6 policy to be age appropriate and be delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students.

The CDE's website encourages schools with students below grade 7 to "consider adopting a suicide prevention policy as a safety net for all of their students. This is particularly important since suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youth ages thirteen to eighteen and also is a leading cause of death among ten- to-twelve-year olds. Students in earlier grades also are known to consider, attempt, and die by suicide. Research demonstrates that ideation may start as early as pre-school (however, suicide deaths are very rare among children age nine years or younger)."

- 4) **Resources that are available for schools.** The CDE's website includes resources for schools relative to youth suicide prevention, including a Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Schools (which also addresses students in kindergarten and grades 1-6). <http://www.heardalliance.org/help-toolkit/>

The CDE's website also includes a model youth suicide prevention policy to assist LEAs in developing their own policies.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/suicideprevres.asp>

- 5) **Training resources for schools.** The CDE's website includes information about Project Cal-Well, which is a federal grant to improve mental health awareness, provide professional development that supports mental wellness to LEA personnel, and connect students and families to needed services. Project Cal-Well is a consortium of the CDE and 3 LEAs. This bill requires the policy to address any training to be provided to teachers, but does not explicitly require LEAs to provide training to their teachers.
- <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/projectcalwell.asp>

- 6) **Fiscal impact.** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose one-time Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures, likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, for each LEA serving students in kindergarten through grade 6 to adopt a policy on suicide prevention. There are more than 500

LEAs that would be required to develop a policy. Actual costs will depend on how LEAs choose to implement the requirements of the bill. If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to LEAs or provide funding through the K-12 Mandate Block Grant.

**SUPPORT**

None received

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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