
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SB 972 **Hearing Date:** March 14, 2018
Author: Portantino
Version: March 5, 2018
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Lynn Lorber

Subject: Pupil and student health: identification cards: suicide prevention hotline telephone number

SUMMARY

This bill requires schools that serve students in any of grades 7-12, and institutions of higher education, that issue student identification cards to have printed on the back of the identification card the number for a suicide hotline or text line, or both.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the governing board or body of a local educational agency (LEA) that serves students in any grades 7 to 12 to adopt, before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year, a policy on student suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12. (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 and, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. (EC § 215)
- 3) Requires the policy to specifically address the needs of high-risk groups, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
 - a) Youth bereaved by suicide.
 - b) Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
 - c) Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.
 - d) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth. (EC § 215)
- 4) Requires the California Department of Education to develop and maintain a model policy to serve as a guide for LEAs. (EC § 215)

- 5) 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 California Department of Education (CDE), and informs schools about the suicide prevention training provided by the CDE and describes how a school might retain those services. (Education Code § 49604)
- 6) Requires the Instructional Quality Commission, when revising the health framework, to consider developing, and recommending for adoption by the state board, a distinct category on mental health instruction to educate pupils about all aspects of mental health. Existing law requires that instruction to include, among other things, how to appropriately seek and find assistance from mental health professionals and services within the school district and in the community for themselves or others. (EC § 51900.5)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires schools that serve students in any of grades 7-12, and institutions of higher education that issue student identification cards to have printed on the back of the identification card the number for a suicide hotline or text line, or both. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, beginning July 1, 2019, a public school or private school that serves students in any of grades 7-12 that issues student identification cards to have printed on the back of the cards the telephone number for a suicide prevention hotline, or the Crisis Text Line, or both numbers.
- 2) Requires, beginning July 1, 2019, a public or private institution of higher education that issues student identification cards to have printed on the back of the cards the telephone number for a suicide prevention hotline, or the Crisis Text Line, or both numbers.
- 3) Specifies that public schools include charter schools.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) *Need for the bill.* According to the author, “Adolescent suicide and self-inflicted injury are a serious social and public health concern. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, studies show that at least 90% of teens who kill themselves have some type of mental health issue, such as depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol abuse, or a behavioral problem. Most teens who commit suicide struggle with a mood disorder which is an illness of the brain. Recently, the California Department of Education adopted a model youth suicide prevention policy to help educate and train counselors and school employees of the signs of suicidal behavior and mental illness. Expanding the policy to provide an easily

accessible suicide prevention telephone hotline number on a student's identification cards will be another necessary resource for potential lifesaving help.”

- 2) *Suicide rates.* In an April 2016 report, the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention reported an increase in the national suicide rate of 24 percent between 1999 and 2014, from 10.5 to 13.0 per 100,000, with the pace of increase greater after 2006. The largest increase for females occurred among those aged 10-14 years. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, in California, suicide is the third leading cause of death for people age 10-24 years.

In 2016-17, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration conducted an investigation of youth suicide in Santa Clara County. According to the report, Palo Alto and Morgan Hill have the highest suicide rates in the county among 10- to 24-year-olds. In addition, males and 20- to 24-year-olds were found to be among the groups at highest risk.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, suicidal individuals that spoke with trained crisis hotline staff were found to be less likely to feel depressed and suicidal following the phone call, and crisis hotline staff were found to have improved skills in developing a connection with the suicidal caller.

- 3) *Other sources.* This bill requires the telephone number for a suicide prevention hotline or the Crisis Text Line to be printed on the back of student identification cards. Students may also find this information online, on posters that may be in limited locations on campus, or in their school district's suicide prevention policy. The author believes that suicide prevention hotline and/or text line numbers should be printed on student identification cards because students typically have their identification cards on their persons, while students may otherwise see this information only sporadically or after searching online.
- 4) *No student identification card?* This bill applies only to schools and colleges that choose to issue student identification cards. To address schools that do not issue student identification cards, should this bill be amended to require the school district's suicide prevention policy to include how students will be provided with a suicide prevention hotline or the Crisis Text Line number?
- 5) *Related legislation.* AB 2391 (Harper) requires beginning July 1, 2019, a campus of the California Community Colleges or the California State University that issues student identification cards, and requests a campus of the University of California, that issues student identification cards to include on the back of the student identification cards the telephone numbers for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line, and the campus police or security telephone number or, if the campus does not have a campus police or security telephone number, the local nonemergency telephone number. AB 2391 is pending in the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

AB 2639 (Berman) requires the California Department of Education to identify evidence-based online training programs that a local educational agency can use to train school staff and students as part of the local educational agency's policy on student suicide prevention. AB 2639 is pending referral in the Assembly.

SUPPORT

American Academy of Pediatrics
California Catholic Conference
California School Boards Association
Hacienda La Puente Unified School District

OPPOSITION

None received

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