
Referrals for Behavioral Concerns

Policy 3-205

Scope:

In compliance with Education Code §49428.2, this policy addresses the referral of students in grades 7-12 for behavioral concerns.

The Governing Board recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to behavioral health supports for all students. The Governing Board hereby adopts this policy to address the needs of high-risk pupil groups, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Pupils bereaved by death or loss of a close family member or friend.
- Pupils for whom there is concern due to behavioral health disorders, including common psychiatric conditions and substance use disorders such as opioid and alcohol abuse.
- Pupils with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
- Pupils experiencing homelessness or placed in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning pupils.

This policy was developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders and school-linked behavioral health professionals

The District staff who oversees the mental and behavioral health needs of students is responsible for coordinating implementation of these group-specific referral protocols, in collaboration with the appropriate administrators.

1. Needs Assessment

The District shall implement and maintain procedures and protocols for identifying student behavioral and health trends, as well as potential service gaps in serving high-risk District communities.

Purpose

The Governing Board recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to behavioral health supports for all students, particularly those in high-risk groups.

2. Referral Process

As needed, students and parents/guardians may be provided referrals to behavioral/mental health services in the community and/or to behavioral/mental health services at or near district schools. Referrals shall:

- Address the appropriate and timely referral by school staff of students with behavioral health concerns
- Takes into account the unique risk factors and warning signs of behavioral health problems in adolescents and the importance of early intervention
- Reflect a multitiered system of support process and positive behavioral interventions and supports, to be used as an alternative to disciplinary action as appropriate
- The protocols shall be accessible to students who may be the subject of disciplinary action.
- Be adaptable to varied local service arrangements for behavioral health services
- Reflect evidence-based and culturally appropriate approaches to student behavioral health referral without disciplinary actions
- Address the inclusion of parents/guardians in the referral process
- Be written to ensure clarity and ease of use by certificated and classified school employees
- Reflect differentiated referral processes for students with exceptional needs and other populations for whom the referral process may be distinct
- Be consistent with state activities conducted by the California Department of Education in the administration of federally funded behavioral health program

3. Training

The District shall provide training to staff serving Grade 7-12 students designed to address student behavioral concerns. Such training shall include, but not be limited to:

- Identifying appropriate contacts for behavioral health evaluation services at the schoolsite and within the larger community.
- When and how to refer pupils and their families to those services.
- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of youth behavioral health disorders, including, but not limited to, psychiatric conditions and substance use disorders.
- How to maintain pupil privacy and confidentiality in a manner consistent with federal and state privacy laws.
- Instruction on the safe de-escalation of crisis situations involving pupils with a youth behavioral health disorder.

Such training shall be provided to all certificated employees, and at least 40% of classified employees, who interact with students in grades 7-12 no later than July 1, 2029.

4. Restrictions on Referrals

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging school employees to diagnose or treat youth behavioral health disorders unless they are specifically credentialed and employed to do so.