

Assembly Bill No. 2639

CHAPTER 437

An act to amend Section 215 of the Education Code, relating to pupil health.

[Approved by Governor September 17, 2018. Filed with
Secretary of State September 17, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2639, Berman. Pupil suicide prevention policies: reviews: updates.

Existing law requires the governing board or body of a local educational agency that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to, before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year, adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention, as specified, that specifically addresses the needs of high-risk groups.

This bill would require the governing board or body of a local educational agency that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to review, at minimum every 5th year, its policy on pupil suicide prevention and, if necessary, update its policy. By imposing additional duties on local educational agencies, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, after a period of nearly consistent decline in suicide rates in the United States from 1986 to 1999, inclusive, suicide rates have increased almost steadily from 1999 to 2014, inclusive, with especially steep increases from 2006 to 2014, inclusive.

(2) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reports that suicide among adolescents and young adults is increasing, and is now the second leading cause of death for youth and young adults 10 to 24 years of age, inclusive.

(3) As children and teens spend a significant amount of their young lives in school, the personnel who interact with them on a daily basis are in a

prime position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and make the appropriate referrals for help.

(4) In a national survey conducted by the Jason Foundation, pupils reported that the number one person they would turn to for helping a friend who might be suicidal was a teacher.

(5) It is imperative that when a young person comes to school staff for help, that person has the knowledge, tools, and resources to respond.

(6) However, research on teacher and school staff preparedness has identified a lack of experience, training, and confidence to appropriately address mental health issues and suicidal ideation among pupils.

(7) The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, authored by the United States Surgeon General and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, states that teachers and school counselors, among others who are on the front lines of suicide prevention, should be trained on suicide prevention.

(8) In 2016, AB 2246 (Chapter 642 of the Statutes of 2016) was enacted, requiring that each county office of education, school district, state special school, and charter school that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, adopt a pupil suicide prevention policy before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year. That law also requires that these policies address any training to be provided to teachers on suicide awareness and prevention.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that adopted policies on pupil suicide prevention be reviewed and, if necessary, updated to ensure that those policies remain relevant and address youth suicide prevention.

SEC. 2. Section 215 of the Education Code is amended to read:

215. (a) (1) The governing board or body of a local educational agency that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall, before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year, adopt, at a regularly scheduled meeting, a policy on pupil suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12, inclusive. The policy shall be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts and shall, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

(2) The policy shall 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.

(3) (A) The policy shall also address any training to be provided to teachers of pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, on suicide awareness and prevention.

(B) Materials approved by a local educational agency for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the schoolsite and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.

(C) Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

(4) The policy shall be written to ensure that a school employee acts only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license. Nothing in this section shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging a school employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

(5) To assist local educational agencies in developing policies for pupil suicide prevention, the department shall develop and maintain a model policy in accordance with this section to serve as a guide for local educational agencies.

(b) The governing board or body of a local educational agency that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall review, at minimum every fifth year, its policy on pupil suicide prevention and, if necessary, update its policy.

(c) Nothing in this section shall prevent the governing board or body of a local educational agency from reviewing or updating its policy on pupil suicide prevention more frequently than every fifth year.

(d) For purposes of this section, "local educational agency" means a county office of education, school district, state special school, or charter school.

SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.