RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS

The Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS), in coordination with TEA, shall provide and annually update a list of recommended best practice-based early mental health intervention and suicide prevention programs for implementation in public elementary, junior high, middle, and high schools within the general education setting. The District may select from the list a program or programs appropriate for implementation in the District.

The programs on the list must include components that provide for training counselors, teachers, nurses, administrators, and other staff, as well as law enforcement officers and social workers who regularly interact with students, to:

1. Recognize students at risk of committing suicide, including students who are or may be the victims of or who engage in bullying;
2. Recognize students displaying early warning signs and a possible need for early mental health intervention, which warning signs may include declining academic performance, depression, anxiety, isolation, unexplained changes in sleep or eating habits, and destructive behavior toward self and others; and
3. Intervene effectively with students described by items 1 or 2 above, by providing notice and referral to a parent or guardian so appropriate action, such as seeking mental health services, may be taken by a parent or guardian.

POLICY

The Board may adopt a policy concerning early mental health intervention and suicide prevention that:

1. Establishes a procedure for providing notice of a recommendation for early mental health intervention regarding a student to a parent or guardian of the student within a reasonable amount of time after the identification of early warning signs, which may include declining academic performance, depression, anxiety, isolation, unexplained changes in sleep or eating habits, and destructive behavior toward self and others;
2. Establishes a procedure for providing notice of a student identified as at risk of committing suicide to a parent or guardian of the student within a reasonable amount of time after the identification of early warning signs;
3. Establishes that the District may develop a reporting mechanism and may designate at least one person to act as a liaison officer in the District for the purposes of identifying students in need of early mental health intervention or suicide prevention; and

4. Sets out available counseling alternatives for a parent or guardian to consider when his or her child is identified as possibly being in need of early mental health intervention or suicide prevention.

The policy must prohibit the use without the prior consent of a student's parent or guardian of a medical screening of the student as part of the process of identifying whether the student is possibly in need of early mental health intervention or suicide prevention.

The policy and any necessary procedures adopted must be included in the annual student handbook and the district improvement plan under Education Code 11.252. [See BQ]

District policy and procedures are not intended to interfere with the rights of parents or guardians and the decision-making regarding the best interest of the child. District policy and procedures are intended to notify a parent or guardian of a need for mental health intervention so that a parent or guardian may take appropriate action. School districts do not have the authority to prescribe medications. Any and all medical decisions are to be made by a parent or guardian of a student.

Health and Safety Code 161.325(d)–(f), (i)