

Policy 5141.52: Suicide Prevention

Status: ADOPTED

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The Governing Board recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth, prevention is a collective effort that requires stakeholder engagement, and school personnel who regularly interact with students are often in a position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and to offer appropriate referral and/or assistance. In an effort to reduce suicidal behavior, its impact on students and families, and other trauma associated with suicide, the Superintendent or designee shall develop measures, strategies, practices, and supports for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

In developing policy and procedures for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, and, in developing policy for grades K-9, the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

School and community stakeholders and school mental health professionals with whom the Superintendent or designee shall consult may include district and school administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, other staff, parents/guardians and caregivers, students, local health agencies, mental health professionals, community organizations, law enforcement, legal counsel, and/or the district's risk manager or insurance carrier. The Superintendent or designee may also collaborate with county and/or city governments in an effort to align district policy with any existing community suicide prevention plans.

Measures and strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Staff development on suicide awareness and prevention for teachers, interns, school counselors, and others who interact with students, including, as appropriate, substitute teachers, coaches, expanded day learning staff, crossing guards, tutors, and volunteers
2. Instruction to students in problem-solving, coping, and resiliency skills to promote students' mental, emotional, and social health and well-being, as well as instruction in recognizing and appropriately responding to warning signs of suicidal intent in others
3. Methods for promoting a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with the school and that is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.
4. The review of materials and resources used in awareness efforts and communications to ensure they align with best practices for safe and effective messaging about suicide
5. The provision of information to parents/guardians and caregivers regarding risk and protective factors, warning signs of suicide, the severity of the suicide problem among youth, the district's suicide prevention curriculum, the district's suicide prevention policy and procedures, basic steps for helping suicidal youth, the importance of communicating with appropriate staff if suicide risk is present or suspected, access to suicide prevention training, and/or school and community resources that can help youth in crisis
6. Encouragement for students to notify appropriate school personnel or other adults when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions
7. Crisis intervention procedures for addressing suicide threats or attempts
8. Counseling and other post-intervention strategies for helping students, staff, and others cope in the aftermath of a student's suicide
9. Establishment of district and/or school-site crisis intervention team(s) to ensure the proper implementation and review of this policy and other district practices related to the emotional and behavioral wellness of students, including, but not limited to, the oversight of mental health and suicide prevention training, collaboration with

community mental health organizations, identification of resources and organizations that provide evidence-based treatment, collaboration to build community response, and compliance with Education Code 215

As appropriate, these measures and strategies shall specifically address the needs of students who are at high risk of suicide, including, but not limited to, students who are bereaved by suicide; students with disabilities, mental illness, or substance-use disorders; students who are experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings such as foster care; and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. (Education Code 215)

The Board shall ensure that measures and strategies for students in grades K-9 are age appropriate and delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. (Education Code 215)

If a referral is made for mental health or related services for a student in grade K-9 who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary, the Superintendent or designee shall coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan. (Education Code 215)

District employees shall act only within the authorization and scope of their credentials or license. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging district employees to diagnose or treat mental illness unless they are specifically licensed and employed to do so. (Education Code 215)

The Board shall review and update this policy as necessary **at least every five years**. The Board may, at its discretion, review the policy more frequently. (Education Code 215)

The Superintendent or designee shall periodically review district data pertaining to the school climate and reports of suicidal ideation, attempts, or death to identify patterns or trends and make recommendations regarding program development.

The Superintendent or designee shall post this policy on the district's website, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to parents/guardians and students. (Education Code 234.6)

Suicide Prevention Crisis Team

To ensure the policies regarding suicide prevention are properly adopted, implemented, and updated, YES Charter Academy created an in-house Suicide Prevention Crisis Team ("SPCT") consisting of administrators, relevant staff, parents, and middle and high school students.

YES Charter Academy designates the following administrators to act as the primary and secondary suicide prevention liaisons to lead the SPCT:

1.
Louise Miller, Principal/Superintendent

2.
Dawn Kaudart, Family Liaison

The functions of the SPCT are to:

- Review mental health related school policies and procedures;

- Provide annual updates on school and district data and trends;

- Review and revise school prevention policies;
- Review and select general and specialized mental health and suicide prevention training;
- Review and oversee staff, parent/guardian, and student training;
- Ensuring the suicide prevention policy, protocols, and resources are posted on the district and school websites;
- Collaborate with community mental health organizations,
- Identify resources and agencies that provide evidence-based or evidence-informed treatment,
- Help inform and build skills among law enforcement and other relevant partners, and
- Collaborate to build community response.

Staff Development

YES Charter Academy, along with its partners, has carefully reviewed available staff training to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

Training shall be provided for all school staff members. It may also be provided, when appropriate, for other adults on campus. Training shall include the following:

1.

All suicide prevention training shall be offered under the direction of mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, other public entity professionals, such as psychologists or social workers) who have received advanced training specific to suicide, or by qualified professionals designated by district administrative leadership. Charter School has collaborated with Sutter-Yuba Behavioral Health to review the

training materials and content to ensure it is evidence-based, evidence-informed, and aligned with best practices.

2.

Staff training may be adjusted year-to-year based on previous professional development activities and emerging best practices.

3.

Charter schools should ensure that training is available for new hires during the school year.

4.

At least annually, all staff should receive training on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, suicide prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention.

5.

At a minimum, all staff shall participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention) at the beginning of their employment or annually. Core components of the general suicide prevention training shall include:

a.

Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors.

b.

How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide.

c.

How to respond appropriately to the youth who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk of suicide and an immediate referral for a suicide risk assessment.

d.

Emphasis on immediately referring (same day) to any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide for assessment while being under constant monitoring by staff members.

e.

Emphasis on reducing stigma associated with mental illness and that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

f.

Reviewing the data annually to look for any patterns or trends of the prevalence or occurrence of suicide ideation, attempts, or death. Data from the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (Cal-SCHLS) should also be analyzed to identify school climate deficits and drive program development. See the Cal-SCHLS Web site at <http://cal-schls.wested.org/>.

g.

Information regarding groups of students judged by the school, and available research, to be at elevated risk for suicide. These groups include, but are not limited to, the following:

i.

Youth affected by suicide.

ii.

Youth with a history of suicide ideation or attempts.

iii.

Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance abuse disorders.

iv.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth.

v.

Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.

vi.

Youth who have suffered traumatic experiences.

vii.

[Charter School may insert other local youth populations vulnerable to depression and suicide].

6.

In addition to initial orientations to the core components of suicide prevention, ongoing annual staff professional

development for all staff may include the following components:

a.

The impact of traumatic stress on emotional and mental health.

b.

Common misconceptions about suicide.

c.

Charter School and community suicide prevention resources.

d.

Appropriate messaging about suicide (correct terminology, safe messaging guidelines).

e.

The factors associated with suicide (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors).

f.

How to identify youth who may be at risk of suicide.

g.

Appropriate ways to interact with a youth who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal. Specifically, how to talk with a student about their thoughts of suicide and (based on YES Charter Academy guidelines) how to respond to such thinking; how to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide and appropriately respond and provide support based on YES Charter Academy guidelines.

h.

Charter School-approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including multi-tiered systems of support and referrals). Such procedures should emphasize that the suicidal student should be constantly supervised until a suicide risk assessment is completed.

i.

Charter School-approved procedures for responding to the aftermath of suicidal behavior (suicidal behavior postvention).

j.

Responding after a suicide occurs (suicide postvention).

k.

Resources regarding youth suicide prevention.

l.

Emphasis on stigma reduction and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

m.

Emphasis that any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide is to be immediately referred (same day) for assessment while being constantly monitored by a staff member.

Specialized Professional Development for School-based Mental Health Staff (Screening and/or Assessment

Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment (SRA) and crisis intervention is provided by designated student mental health professionals, including but not limited to school counselors, psychologists, social workers, administrators, and nurses employed by Charter School. Training for these staff is specific to conducting SRAs, intervening during a crisis, deescalating situations, interventions specific to preventing suicide, making referrals, safety planning, and re-entry.

Specialized Professional Training for targeted school-based mental health staff includes the following components:

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Best practices and skill building on how to conduct an effective suicide risk screening/SRA using an evidence-based, Charter-approved tool; Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) Depression Scale; BSS Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation ; National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)'s Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit; and the Adolescent Suicide Assessment Protocol – 20.

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Best practices for approaching and talking with a student about their thoughts of suicide and how to respond to such thinking, based on district guidelines and protocols.

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Best practices on how to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide and appropriately respond and provide support based on district guidelines and protocols.

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Best practices on follow up with parents/caregivers.

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Best practices on re-entry.

Virtual Screenings for Suicide Risk

Virtual suicide prevention efforts include checking in with all students, promoting access to school and community-based resources that support mental wellbeing and those that address mental illness and give specific guidance on suicide prevention.

Charter School has established a protocol for assigning school staff to connect with students during distance learning and school closures. In the event of a school closure, Charter School has determined a process and protocols to establish daily or regular contact with all students. Staff understand that any concern about a student's emotional wellbeing and/or safety must be communicated to the appropriate school staff, according to Charter School protocols.

Charter School has determined a process and protocols for school-based mental health professionals to establish regular contact with high-risk students, students who are on their caseloads, and those who are identified by staff as demonstrating need. When connecting with students, staff are directed to begin each conversation by identifying the location of the student and the availability of parents or caregivers. This practice allows the staff members to ensure the safety of the student, particularly if they have expressed suicidal thoughts.

Employee Qualifications and Scope of Services

Employees of YES Charter Academy must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs, and to prevent the immediate risk of suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in the school setting. In addition, treatment of the mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide.

Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Participation and Education

1.

Parents/guardians/caregivers may be included in suicide prevention efforts. At a minimum, they should share this policy with parents/guardians/caregivers by notifying them where a complete copy of the policy is available.

This Suicide Prevention Policy shall be easily accessible and prominently displayed on the YES Charter Academy Web page and included in the parents' handbook.

2.

Parents/guardians/caregivers should be invited to provide input on the development and implementation of this policy.

3.

Charter School shall establish and widely disseminate a referral process to all parents/guardians/caregivers/families, so they are aware of how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about protocols and school, community-based, and crisis resources.

4.

Community-based organizations that provide evidence-based suicide-specific treatments shall be highlighted on the Charter School's website with treatment referral options marked accordingly.

5.

All parents/guardians/caregivers may have access to suicide prevention training that addresses the following:

a.

Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors.

b.

How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide.

How to respond appropriately to a student who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk of suicide and referral for an immediate suicide risk assessment.

c.

Charter School's referral processes and how they or their children can reach out for help, etc.

6.

Parents/guardians/caregivers are reminded that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") generally protects the confidentiality of student records, which may sometimes include counseling or crisis intervention records. However, FERPA's health or safety emergency provision permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records to appropriate parties, in order to address a health or safety emergency when the disclosure is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

Student Participation and Education

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, YES Charter Academy along with its partners has carefully reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide. Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with YES Charter Academy and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

YES Charter Academy's instructional and student support program will promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students, including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience. The instructions shall not use the stress model to explain suicide.

YES Charter Academy's instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed. If suicide prevention is included in the Charter School's instructional curriculum, it shall consider the grade

level and age of the students and be delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. Under the supervision of an appropriately trained individual acting within the scope of her/his credential or license, students shall:

1.

Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress. The content of the education may include:

a.

Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma.

b.

How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others.

c.

Help-seeking strategies for oneself and others, including how to engage school-based and community resources and refer peers for help.

d.

Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

2.

Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding YES Charter Academy's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

Student-focused suicide prevention education can be incorporated into classroom curricula (e.g., health classes, orientation classes, science, and physical education).

YES Charter Academy will support the creation and implementation of programs and/or activities on campus that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Week, Peer Counseling.).

Charter School maintains a list of current student trainings and is available upon request. Charter School has shared school-based support and self-reporting procedures, so students are able to seek help if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or if they recognize signs of peers. Although confidentiality and privacy are important, students should understand safety is a priority and if there is a risk of suicide, school staff are required to report. **When reporting suicidal ideation or an attempt, school staff must maintain confidentiality and only share information limited to the risk or attempt.**

Charter schools shall establish and widely disseminate a referral process to all students, so they know how to access support through school, community-based, and crisis services. Students shall be encouraged to notify a staff member

when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they have knowledge or concerns about another student's emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or attempt.

Intervention and Emergency Procedures

Whenever a staff member suspects or has knowledge of a student's suicidal intentions, they shall promptly notify the primary designated suicide prevention liaison. If this primary suicide prevention liaison is unavailable, the staff should promptly notify the secondary suicide prevention liaison.

The suicide prevention liaison shall immediately notify the Principal or designee, who shall then notify the student's parent/guardian as soon as possible if appropriate and in the best interest of the student. Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.

The suicide prevention liaison should also refer the student to mental health resources at YES Charter Academy or in the community.

When a student is in imminent danger (has access to a gun, is on a rooftop, or in other unsafe conditions), a call should be made to 911. The call shall NOT be made in the presence of the student and the student shall not be left unsupervised. Staff shall NOT physically restrain or block an exit.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported on campus or at a school-related activity, the suicide prevention liaison shall, at a minimum:

1.

Ensure the student's physical safety by one or more of the following, as appropriate:

a.

Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred.

b.

Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.

c.

Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.

d.

Remaining calm, keeping in mind the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed.

e.

Moving all other students out of the immediate area.

f.

Not sending the student away or leaving him/her alone, even to go to the restroom.

g.

Providing comfort to the student, listening and allowing the student to talk and being comfortable with moments of silence.

h.

Promising privacy and help, but not promising confidentiality.

2.

Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.

3.

Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed and coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary. **Determination of notification to parents/guardians/caregivers should follow a formal initial assessment to ensure that the student is not endangered by parental notification.**

4.

After a referral is made, YES Charter Academy should verify with the parent/guardian that the follow-up treatment has been accessed. Parents/guardians will be required to provide documentation of care for the student. If parents/guardians refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the suicide prevention liaisons should meet with the parent to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues) and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of care. If follow-up care is still not provided, YES Charter Academy may contact Child Protective Services.

5.

Provide access to counselors or other appropriate personnel to listen to and support students and staff who were directly or indirectly involved with the incident at YES Charter Academy.

6.

Provide an opportunity for all who respond to the incident to debrief, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used, and make recommendations for future actions.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted on the YES Charter Academy campus, the suicide prevention liaison shall

follow the crisis intervention procedures contained in YES Charter Academy's safety plan. After consultation with the Principal or designee and the student's parent/guardian about facts that may be divulged in accordance with the laws governing confidentiality of student record information, the Principal or designee may provide students, parents/guardians, and staff with information, counseling, and/or referrals to community agencies as needed. YES Charter Academy staff may receive assistance from YES Charter Academy counselors or other mental health professionals in determining how best to discuss suicide or attempted suicide with students.

In the event a suicide occurs or is attempted off the YES Charter Academy campus and unrelated to school activities, the Principal or designee shall take the following steps to support the student:

1.

Contact the parent/guardian and offer support to the family.

2.

Discuss with the family how they would like YES Charter Academy to respond to the attempt while minimizing widespread rumors among teachers, staff, and students.

3.

Obtain permission from the parent/guardian to share information to ensure the facts regarding the crisis are correct.

4.

The suicide prevention liaisons shall handle any media requests.

5.

Provide care and determine appropriate support for affected students.

6.

Offer to the student and parent/guardian steps for re-integration to school. Re-integration may include obtaining a written release from the parent/guardian to speak with any health care providers; conferring with the student and parent/guardian about any specific requests on how to handle the situation; informing the student's teachers about possible days of absences; allowing accommodations for make-up work (being understanding that missed assignments may add stress to the student); appropriate staff maintaining ongoing contact with the student to monitor the student's actions and mood; and working with the parent/guardian to involve the student in an aftercare plan; providing parent's/guardians/caregivers/families local emergency numbers for after school and weekend emergency contacts.

Supporting Students during or after a Mental Health Crisis

Students shall be encouraged through the education program and in YES Charter Academy activities to notify a teacher, the Principal, another YES Charter Academy administrator, psychologist, YES Charter Academy counselor, suicide prevention liaisons, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions. YES Charter Academy staff should treat each report seriously, calmly, and with active listening and support. Staff should be non-judgmental to students and discuss with the student and the student's parent/guardian about additional resources to support the student.

Responding After a Suicide Death (Postvention)

A death by suicide in the school community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on the school community, including students and staff. YES Charter Academy shall follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide, which incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

The suicide prevention liaison shall:

1.

Coordinate with the Principal to conduct an initial meeting of the Suicide Prevention Crisis Team (excluding student members, if any) to:

a.

Confirm death and cause.

b.

Identify a staff member to contact the deceased's family (within 24 hours).

c.

Enact the Suicide Postvention Response.

d.

Notify all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).

2.

Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:

a.

Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death.

b.

Emotional support and resources are available to staff.

c.

Notification to students about suicide deaths and the availability of support services (if this is the protocol that is decided by administration).

d.

Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.

3.

Prepare staff to respond to the needs of students regarding the following:

a.

Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment.

b.

Talking points for staff to notify students.

c.

Resources are available to students (on and off campus).

4.

Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior, and refer them to a school-based mental health professional.

5.

Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior.

6.

Communicate with the larger school community about the suicide death. Staff shall not share explicit, graphic, or dramatic content, including the manner of death.

7.

Consider funeral arrangements for family and the school community.

8.

Respond to memorial requests in a respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered.

9.

Identify a media spokesperson if needed.

10.

Ensure that all communications, documents, materials related to messaging about suicide avoid discussing details about the method of suicide, avoid oversimplifying (i.e. identifying a singular cause of suicide), avoid sensational language, and only includes clear, respectful, people-first language that encourages an environment free of stigma. As part of safe messaging for suicide, we use specific terminology when referring to actions related to suicide or suicidal behavior:

Use	Do Not Use
"Died by suicide" or "Took their own life"	"Committed suicide" Note: Use of the word "commit" can imply crime/sin
"Attempted suicide"	"Successful" or "unsuccessful" Note: There is no success, or lack of success, when dealing with suicide

11.

Include long-term suicide postvention responses:

a.

Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant event) and how these will be addressed.

b.

Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of deceased.

c.

Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide.

Student Identification Cards

Charter School will include the telephone numbers on all student identification cards:

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National Suicide Prevention Lifeline/Suicide Crisis Lifeline:

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Call or Text “988”

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Call 1-800-273-8255

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National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 1-800-799-7233

-

Crisis Text Line: Text “HOME” to 741741

-

Teen Line: Text “TEEN” to 839863

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Trevor Project: Text “START” to 678678

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Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860

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Local suicide prevention hotline telephone number
