

CLIENT NEWS BRIEF

Governor Signs New Law Requiring Schools to Adopt Pupil Suicide Prevention Policies

Governor Jerry Brown has signed Assembly Bill (AB) 2246, which requires all county offices of education, school districts, state special schools and charter schools serving pupils in grades 7-12 to adopt pupil suicide prevention policies. Signed into law during National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, AB 2246 represents an effort to address rising youth suicide rates.

AB 2246 contains a number of requirements that local educational agencies (LEAs) must follow in developing their pupil suicide prevention policies. Similar to the adoption of plans related to school funding, AB 2246 requires input from a number of individuals in the formulation of pupil suicide prevention policies, including school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals and suicide prevention experts. Policies will be required to address procedures related to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention (support procedures for family, friends and peers of a suicide victim). Policies must also specifically address the needs of identified "high-risk" groups, which include youth bereaved by suicide; youth with disabilities, mental illness or substance abuse issues; homeless and foster youth; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth.

AB 2246 also requires that policies address training on suicide awareness and prevention to be provided to teachers of pupils in grades 7-12. While AB 2246 does not explicitly require that teachers be trained in such areas, the mandatory inclusion of training within the pupil suicide prevention policies heavily insinuates that they should. Moreover, AB 2246 states that training materials approved by an LEA must include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the school site and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youths and their families to those services.

In order to support efforts to adopt pupil suicide prevention policies, AB 2246 requires that the California Department of Education (CDE) develop and maintain a model policy to "serve as a guide" for LEAs. CDE already provides a number of resources to assist LEAs in addressing youth suicide, and maintains access to a wide array of resources [on its website](#). Despite the urgency with which AB 2246 calls for LEAs to take action, the new law does not set a deadline for CDE to publish a model policy. In the meantime, the California School Boards Association has developed its own model policy (Board Policy/Administrative Regulation 5141.52) which may be used as a starting point, though it should be cautioned that this policy, in its current form, may not meet all the requirements of AB 2246.

The new law calls for LEAs to adopt their pupil suicide prevention policies prior to the commencement of the 2017-2018 school year (i.e. prior to July 1, 2017). LEAs should plan to adopt policies no later than their last regularly-scheduled governing board meeting of the 2016-2017 school year, as AB 2246 specifically requires that adoption occur at a regular (rather than a special) meeting. This timeline is further impacted by the requirement that LEAs gather input from various stakeholders and experts who must be part of the policy development process. Based on these relatively short timelines, LEAs are encouraged to

October 2016
Number 82



Michelle L. Cannon
Partner
Sacramento Office
mcannon@lozanosmith.com



Paul Z. McGlocklin
Associate
Los Angeles Office
pmcglocklin@lozanosmith.com



As the information contained herein is necessarily general, its application to a particular set of facts and circumstances may vary. For this reason, this News Brief does not constitute legal advice. We recommend that you consult with your counsel prior to acting on the information contained herein.

CLIENT NEWS BRIEF

October 2016
Number 82

begin the process of drafting or revising existing pupil suicide prevention policies as soon as possible.

For more information on AB 2246 or adopting compliant policies, please contact the authors of this Client News Brief or an attorney at one of our [10 offices](#) located statewide. You can also visit our [website](#), follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or download our [Client News Brief App](#).

As the information contained herein is necessarily general, its application to a particular set of facts and circumstances may vary. For this reason, this News Brief does not constitute legal advice. We recommend that you consult with your counsel prior to acting on the information contained herein.