



Senator Melissa Hurtado

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 14

Senate Bill 331

Teen Suicide Prevention

As Introduced February 19, 2018

SUMMARY

SB 331 will require all California counties to develop a suicide prevention strategic plan, with an emphasis on adolescents.

THE PROBLEM

Over a ten year period (2007 – 2016), California has experienced a constant rise in deaths by suicide. Alarming, youth suicide and self-inflicted injury is on the rise, and is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 15-24 in the U.S. In California, almost 20% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, with almost one-half (49%) of LGBTQ students reporting suicidal ideation – more than three times the estimate for their straight peers.ⁱ **Suicide rates among teenage girls have hit a 40-year high.**

Several factors put teens at risk for suicide, including a family history of mental illness, substance abuse, exposure to suicidal behavior, and incarceration,ⁱⁱ with suicidal ideation being more common among females, people of color, and LGBTQ youth. In Fresno County alone, for each teen who dies by suicide approximately 70 youth were treated in the emergency department following self-injury, and more than 5,000 adolescents thought seriously about ending their lives.ⁱⁱⁱ

BACKGROUND

Studies show that prevention and early intervention efforts can help avoid a suicidal crisis. Local governments play a key role in convening stakeholders from diverse sectors like school districts, health care, youth justice, media

campaigns, and community education and organizing. When counties implement strategic suicide prevention plans, they result in fewer suicide deaths in their county.

For example, in Santa Clara County, which has had a concerted suicide prevention effort since 2010, has seen a significant drop in suicide deaths. In 2016 and 2017 Santa Clara County suicide deaths decreased by 11% and 14%, respectively.

Currently underway, Fresno County's suicide prevention plan, finalized in September 2018, is funded by the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health and convenes the Fresno County Suicide Prevention Collaborative, a large cross sector of both individuals and community organizations tasked with reducing suicides in Fresno County.

However, since 2009, only seven of California's fifty eight counties have adopted suicide prevention strategic plans: Contra Costa, Fresno, San Diego, San Mateo, Santa Clara County, Solano, and Tuolumne counties currently have a formal plan and working groups to implement their plans.

Currently Marin and Santa Cruz counties have convened working groups to produce a suicide prevention strategic plan, but many other counties have yet to take necessary steps to convene working groups. Without state action, it will be decades before the remaining fifty counties complete comprehensive and coordinated work on suicide prevention.



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SOLUTION

More proactive action is needed to help address suicidal behavior and prevent teen suicide. SB XX will help prevent teen suicide by requiring all California counties to implement strategic suicide prevention plans, with the emphasis on young people.

SUPPORT

Steinberg Institute

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ⁱ <https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/34/youth-suicide-and-self-inflicted-injury/summary>

ⁱⁱ Several other factors put teens at risk for suicide, including a family history of suicide, past suicide attempts, mental illness, substance abuse, stressful life events, low levels of communication with parents, access to lethal means, exposure to suicidal behavior of others, and incarceration (KidsData).

ⁱⁱⁱ Fresno County Suicide Prevention Plan Executive Summary.