

# Report On Student Suicide Prevention Policies in California



**Abstract:** The Trevor Project finds that 86% of local education agencies serving students in grades 7–12 currently have a student suicide prevention policy, leaving as much as 14% without established suicide prevention policies.

# INTRODUCTION

Suicide is the third highest cause of death among young people ages 10–19. This demographic typically spends countless hours surrounded by school faculty and staff. Because these professionals have unique opportunities to recognize signals of suicidal ideation, it is critically important that schools equip their faculty and staff with the knowledge, tools and training they need to prevent suicide.

Beginning in the 2017–2018 academic year, California State Assembly Bill 2246 (AB 2246) requires all local education agencies (“LEA,” defined as a public board of education or other public authority which administers the schools in a city, county, township, or school district), serving students in grades 7–12 to establish policies for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. According to this legislation, these policies should be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. Additionally, the suicide prevention policies must specifically address the unique circumstances of high-risk student populations, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) young people.

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization for suicide prevention and crisis intervention among LGBTQ young people. In the summer of 2018, The Trevor Project’s advocacy department reviewed the prevalence of student suicide prevention policies among California LEAs following the passage of AB 2246.

# METHODOLOGY

The Trevor Project staff generated a list of all LEAs serving students in grades 7–12 through DataQuest, the California Department of Education’s web-based data reporting system. This criterion applied to 478 local education agencies.

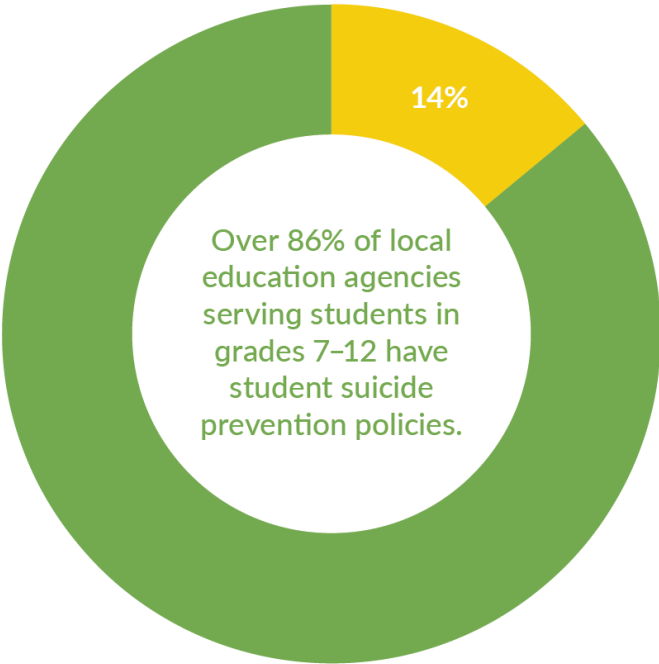
Volunteers from The Trevor Project then conducted a primary review of each local education agency’s website for policies mandated by AB 2246. If a local education agency’s mandated policies were apparent, it was counted as having a student suicide prevention policy. These policies will be reviewed in the future for language pertaining to LGBTQ young people and/or high-risk student populations.

If a local education agency’s mandated policies were not apparent, a secondary review of its website was conducted by another volunteer from The Trevor Project. If the mandated policy was still not found, a tertiary review of its website was conducted by a staff member from The Trevor Project.

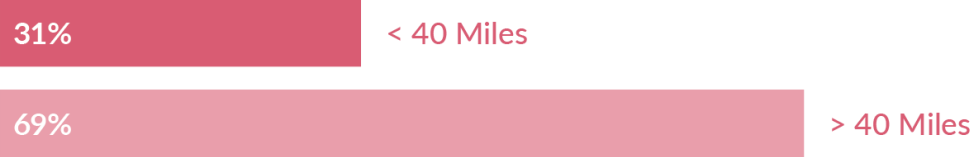
If the local education agency’s mandated policies could not be located after these three searches, a staff member from The Trevor Project called the local education agency during regular regional business hours for assistance in locating the mandated policies, leaving voicemail as appropriate. If the local education agency’s mandated policies were not provided, a staff member from The Trevor Project emailed an administration official within the local education agency for assistance in locating the policies. If after each of these steps were completed and at the expiration of a reasonable time for response the local education agency’s mandated policies were still not made apparent, The Trevor Project would determine that the LEA in question could not be deemed to have a student suicide prevention policy.

# FINDINGS

- Approximately 86% (409) of local education agencies serving students in grades 7–12 were found to have a student suicide prevention policy, leaving as much as 14% (69) potentially lacking a student suicide prevention policy.
- Approximately 82% (62) of local education agencies which did not respond or did not have a suicide prevention policy serve student populations of fewer than 3,650 students, the state average for local education agencies serving students in grades 7–12.
- Nearly 69% (52) of local education agencies which did not have a readily-apparent suicide prevention policy, did not respond to The Trevor Project’s requests, or reported they did not have a suicide prevention policy are located more than 40 miles from a major city, as defined by a population greater than 500,000.



## DISTANCE FROM MAJOR CITY



## STUDENT POPULATION SIZE



# MODEL SCHOOL POLICY

To assist schools and local education agencies in creating effective policies for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention, The Trevor Project collaborated with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) to develop the Model School District Policy for Suicide Prevention, or Model School Policy, in 2014.

The Model School Policy outlines best practices for school districts to follow in order to protect the health and safety of all students by examining strong local policies, ensuring that they are in line with the latest research in the field of suicide prevention and identifying best practices for a national framework. Additionally, the Model School Policy provides professional advice and resources for navigating the complex relationships of mental health, school experiences and suicide.

More information about the Model School Policy can be found at [www.TheTrevorProject.org/education/Model-School-Policy](http://www.TheTrevorProject.org/education/Model-School-Policy).

# CONCLUSION

The Trevor Project plans to work closely with the California State Assembly and California Department of Education in formally auditing local education agencies' compliance with AB 2246. Specifically, the inclusion of resources and support services for LGBTQ young people as enumerated in AB 2246 will be reviewed in each of the student suicide prevention policies. The Trevor Project also calls on the California Department of Education and the California State Assembly to ensure the remaining local education agencies which have yet to prepare and make available a student suicide prevention policy do so based on resources such as the Model School Policy.

Ensuring comprehensive implementation of this legislation will allow for future research into the effectiveness of the Model School Policy and other policies for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. The Trevor Project also plans to expand this endeavor to other states, augmenting policies of this kind across the nation.

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**The Trevor Project** is the leading and only accredited national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people.

The Trevor Project offers a suite of crisis intervention and suicide prevention programs, including [TrevorLifeline](#), [TrevorText](#), and [TrevorChat](#) as well as a peer-to-peer social network support for LGBTQ young people under the age of 25, [TrevorSpace](#). Trevor also offers an education program with resources for youth-serving adults and organizations, a legislative advocacy department fighting for pro-LGBTQ legislation and against anti-LGBTQ rhetoric/policy positions, and conducts research to discover the most effective means to help young LGBTQ people in crisis and end suicide. If you or someone you know is feeling hopeless or suicidal, our TrevorLifeline crisis counselors are available 24/7/365 at 1-866-488-7386.

[www.TheTrevorProject.org](http://www.TheTrevorProject.org)