

City of San José, California

COUNCIL POLICY

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EFFECTIVE DATE March 3, 2020	REVISED DATE	

APPROVED BY COUNCIL ACTION: March 3, 2020; Resolution No. 79421, Item 3.3.

PURPOSE

To create a Council policy regarding the ongoing commitment to increase awareness of suicide as a public health problem, and advance the suicide prevention strategies articulated in the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, which was adopted by the San José City Council in 2011.

BACKGROUND

At its March 5, 2019 San José City Council Policy Priority Setting Session, the City Council approved the development of a City Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan. In 2010, Santa Clara County created a County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan (The Plan). With the adoption of Resolution No. 76060 in 2011, the San José City Council formally supported The Plan in its vision to prevent death by suicide and create a healthier and safer community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, responsible for more than 47,000 deaths in 2017, and claiming more than twice as many lives each year as does homicide. Suicide is a growing public health problem that affects all ages, with over 10 million adults seriously thinking about committing suicide in 2017, 3.2 million having reported making a suicide plan in the past year (2017), and over 1 million reporting a suicide attempt in the past 12 months (2017).

The San José City Council shares the Santa Clara County's (County) mission of bringing community awareness to the issue of suicide and to engage a community effort to stop it. The Council recognizes that the effects of suicide on communities goes well beyond the individual lives lost, and exacts heavy emotional suffering on loved ones, friends, classmates, neighbors, teachers, faith leaders, and colleagues. Because of this, the Council is committed to advancing The Plan.

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It is the Policy of the City of San José to advance suicide prevention strategies in alignment with The Plan developed by the County in 2010. The Plan made five broad recommendations, including “Implement a community education and information campaign to increase public awareness of suicide and suicide prevention,” and “Implement a policy and governance advocacy initiative to promote systems change in suicide awareness and prevention.”

The City of San José, as a major employer in the city and through its broad reach of city residents and businesses, is uniquely positioned to, a) advance awareness of suicide as a major issue in the city, b) increase knowledge of suicide risk factors and warning signs for suicide, as well as c) promote help-seeking among individuals considering suicide, and d) increase awareness of sources to reduce stigma associated with seeking help while helping those in need.

The City will promote strategies and resources provided by the County as well as the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, under the following guiding framework:

1. **CITY EMPLOYEES.** The Administration will share with its current employees and its Retiree Associations (the San José Retired Employees Association and the Association of Retired San Jose Police Officers and Firefighters) information that helps staff and retirees gain a better understanding of the causes of suicide and learn the appropriate methods for identifying and preventing the loss of life. For example, the Administration, through its Office of Employee Relations and/or Human Resources will provide an annual communication to City employees related to suicide prevention. These communications may include such things as updates regarding populations known to have an increased risk for suicide behaviors, which, as of 2012, were identified by the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action as including:

- Individuals with mental and/or substance use disorders;
- Individuals bereaved by suicide;
- Individuals in justice and child welfare settings;
- Individuals who engage in non-suicidal self-injury;
- Individuals who have attempted suicide;
- Individuals with medical conditions;
- Individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT);
- American Indians/Alaska Natives;
- Members of the Armed Forces and veterans;
- Men in midlife; and
- Older men.

The City’s Office of Employee Relations will work with the County’s Behavioral Health Services Suicide Prevention Program to ensure that information shared reflects current research.

2. **CITY FACILITIES.** The City Manager will ensure that the City’s public safety protocols governing the City’s response to a suicide attempt on City facilities is reviewed annually to ensure all internal procedures are updated and address any needed support for employees that may witness such events. The City Manager will further ensure an appropriate communications strategy is in place if a suicide attempt occurs in a City facility. The communication strategy will reflect best practices for reporting on suicide, as shared by the County.
3. **CITY RESIDENTS.** The Administration will actively collaborate with the County government to disseminate information including event information and resources as they become available. This includes sharing information with elected officials who can pass information on through their networks as well as hosting tabling events during Suicide Prevention Month. The City will also maintain its Suicide Prevention & Crisis webpage [<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/fire-department/public-education/suicide-prevention-crisis>] with an easily accessible list of mental health and suicide prevention resources and links to the County’s Behavioral Health Services.
4. **COORDINATION WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES.** The Administration will coordinate and collaborate with county, regional and state efforts that advance the goals of The Plan. This includes supporting state and federal legislation aimed at increasing awareness and reducing deaths by suicide. This also includes working with the County to bring awareness to suicide prevention work during the following:
 - National Suicide Prevention Month (September)
 - National Suicide Prevention Week

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this policy will occur through regular communication with the County’s Behavioral Health Services. Employees will be provided the following resources to learn more about suicide prevention:

Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services – Suicide Prevention & Crisis

www.sccbhd.org/suicideprevention

Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/bhd/Services/SP/Documents/2018/sp-strategic-plan-rev-03-2011-final.pdf>

California Mental Health Services Authority

<https://calmhsa.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Violence Prevention – Suicide

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/index.html>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – Office of the Surgeon General

<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/suicide-prevention/index.html>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

<https://www.sprc.org/>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255 (800-273-TALK)

Suicide Prevention Chat Services

www.SuicidePreventionLifeline.org

Veterans Crisis Line

800-273-8255, 1, Text: 838255