Referral Protocols for Addressing Pupil Behavioral Health Concerns (Grades 7–12)
Board Approved: 3/3/2026

The Governing Board, at its regularly scheduled meeting held on 3/3/26, hereby adopts the following policy on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns in grades 7–12.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school and community partners and school-linked behavioral health professionals. It establishes the adopted procedures for referrals to behavioral health professionals and support services for pupils in grades 7–12.

Addressing the Needs of High-Risk Groups (EC Section 49428.2(b)(3))
The Governing Board recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to behavioral health supports for all pupils. The Governing Board hereby adopts this policy to address the needs of high-risk pupil groups, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pupils with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.
- Foster youth and youth placed in out-of-home settings.
- Homeless youth.
- Pupils experiencing bereavement or loss of a close family member or friend.
- Pupils for whom there is a concern due to behavioral health disorders, including common psychiatric conditions and substance use disorders such as opioid and alcohol abuse.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning pupils.

The **School Counselor and/or other appropriate credentialed/licensed staff** who oversee the mental and behavioral health needs of pupils are responsible for coordinating the implementation of these group-specific referral protocols, in collaboration with the School Director, Foster Youth Liaison, and Homeless Liaison.

School leadership may also identify additional pupil groups at their discretion, such as English learners, recently immigrated pupils, or any other group identified by local data or partner input that indicates increased behavioral health risks.

Student Privacy
iLEAD Online recognizes and agrees to abide by all applicable federal and state pupil data privacy laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Education Code section 49073 et seq., in connection with its policy on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns and the implementation of such policy and protocols.

Referral Protocols and Procedures
The Governing Board hereby adopts the following referral protocols and procedures relating to referrals to behavioral health professionals and support services:

Needs Assessment
The Site Director or designee shall conduct an annual needs assessment to:

- Identify behavioral health trends;
- Review available resources; and
- Detect service gaps within the school community.

Each school site shall review referral volume, response times, and outcomes quarterly and submit findings to the Site Director or designee to support continuous improvement.

Capacity Building
iLEAD Online shall:

- Provide professional development on referral pathways and staff roles.
- Clarify responsibilities among certificated and classified staff; and
- Maintain partnerships with school-linked behavioral health professionals and the community providers.

Planning
The Director or designee shall:

- Define referral pathways for crisis and non-crisis concerns;
- Establish goals and assign responsible roles for each step in the referral process; and
- Enter into memoranda of understanding with external partners, where appropriate, to support referral handoffs and information-sharing.

Implementation
iLEAD Online shall establish step-by-step procedures to:

- Initiate referrals;
- Document concerns;
- Notify parents/guardians consistent with law;
- Triage the level of need;
- Link pupils to appropriate services; and
- Schedule follow-up checks.

The referral process and procedures will be reviewed with school staff annually and clearly outlined for easy access by school staff and parents/guardians.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
iLEAD Online shall conduct an annual evaluation of referral protocols that includes:

- Data collection and analysis;

- Input from staff, families, and community stakeholders; and
- Targeted improvements based on evaluation results.

Evaluation shall monitor outcomes, including, but not limited to:

- Median time to first contact;
- Percentage of follow-ups completed within ten school days;
- Outcomes for the pupil groups identified in Education Code section 49428.2(b)(3).

Training (EC Section 49428.2(b)(4), (c)–(e))

iLEAD Online shall ensure that facilitators of pupils in grades 7–12 receive training on pupil social-emotional and behavioral health. Training materials approved by iLEAD Online shall include:

- How to identify appropriate contacts for behavioral health evaluation, services, or both, at the school site and within the larger community; and
- When and how to refer pupils and their families to those services.

Optional training elements may also include recognizing the signs and symptoms of youth behavioral mental health disorders.

Subject to Education Code section 49428.2(d), iLEAD Online shall certify, on or before July 1, 2029, to the California Department of Education that:

- 100 percent of certificated employees, and
- 40 percent of classified employees who have direct contact with pupils in grades 7–12 have received youth behavioral health training at least once, in accordance with Education Code section 49428.2(c)(1)–(5).

Authorization and Scope of Practice (EC Section 49428.2(b)(5))

To ensure that all school employees act only within the authorization or scope of their credential or license, iLEAD Online shall:

- Provide training and guidance to staff, clarifying their roles in the referral process and the limits of their credentials or licenses.
- Direct employees to refer pupils to appropriately credentialed or licensed professionals when behavioral health concerns are identified.
- Maintain referral protocols specifying which staff positions are authorized to act at each stage of the referral process.
- Review job descriptions and assignments to confirm alignment with credentialing and licensing requirements.
- Inform staff that only licensed or credentialed professionals are permitted to diagnose or treat behavioral health conditions.

Consistent with Education Code sections 49428.1(b)(8) and 49428.2(b)(5), nothing in this policy shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging school employees to diagnose or treat youth behavioral health disorders unless they are specifically licensed and employed to do so.