



## **CITY SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

To affirm the City of Palo Alto's ongoing commitment to the awareness of suicide as a public health concern, promote community collaboration, de-stigmatize mental health concerns and care, and support suicide prevention strategies, including, where possible, those identified in the Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan (May 2024)<sup>1</sup>.

### **BACKGROUND**

Suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in California and in the United States<sup>2</sup> and includes lives across the age span. The effects of suicide on a community reach well beyond the individual life lost, resulting in profound emotional suffering and grief of family members, friends, classmates, teachers, colleagues, neighbors, and congregations.

Suicide is preventable and everyone can play a role in suicide prevention by understanding the warning signs of suicide, learning how to respond, and knowing where to get help.

The City of Palo Alto shares the County of Santa Clara's mission of bringing community awareness to the issue of suicide and supporting a community effort to prevent it. In 2010, the City of Palo Alto adopted a Suicide Prevention Policy with an emphasis on youth suicide prevention. Recognizing that anyone, regardless of age, gender, or race can experience a mental health crisis, this policy expands beyond the youth focus to the community as a whole and incorporates City staff as both implementor and part of the community.

### **POLICY**

It is the policy of the City of Palo Alto to support and advance suicide prevention strategies, including those outlined in the County's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan.

This policy calls for the collaboration between the City of Palo Alto and local and regional organizations, to educate residents and employees to gain a better understanding of the causes of suicide, who might be at risk, and how to report threats of suicide or recommend resources to those showing signs of becoming at risk so they may receive help and support.

---

<sup>1</sup> Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention Program, <https://bhsd.santaclaracounty.gov/get-prevention-services/about-suicide-prevention-program>

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide#](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide#).

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES 3-04/CSD**

Revised: December 5, 2024

This policy calls for the review and development of a Crisis Response and Community Communication Plan to ensure public safety and responsible reporting of a suicide or attempted suicide to both the community and the media including working with local media on appropriate and responsible reporting.

The City will promote strategies and resources provided by the County, under the following guiding framework:

1. CITY RESIDENTS. The City will actively collaborate with Santa Clara County and other local mental health partners to share information and resources related to suicide prevention with the community. The City will maintain an easily accessible list of mental health and suicide prevention resources on the City website including crisis line services and the national simplified phone and text service, 9-8-8.
2. CITY EMPLOYEES. The Human Resources Department will share resources with employees on understanding the causes of suicide, recognizing at-risk behaviors, and appropriate methods to provide support and recommend resources. The City may accomplish this through training programs, the City website, and city-wide communications. Employees should be made aware of this policy and be provided with a list of available and accessible mental health resources.
3. CITY FACILITIES. The City will have public safety protocols in place at City facilities such as safe storage of firearms, medications, and chemicals. Protocols may include posting signage, securing areas with restricted access, and proper chain of custody procedures.
4. COORDINATION WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND PARTNERS. The City will partner and collaborate with the County, regional agencies, and local mental health organizations to advance mental health awareness and suicide prevention strategies. This includes working with the County to bring awareness to suicide prevention work during National Suicide Prevention Month and Mental Health Awareness Month.

This policy shall be reviewed every two years to ensure compliance, relevance, and to make any necessary revisions.

Recommended: DocuSigned by:  
*Kristen O'Kane*  
8028E5A0C634BFC \_\_\_\_\_ 12/31/2024  
Director, Community Services Date

Approved: DocuSigned by:  
*Ed Shikada*  
F20C1A90078D1E3 \_\_\_\_\_ 1/2/2025  
City Manager Date