



RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D.

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

August 17, 2023

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**Judith C. Clark, Presiding Judge**  
Superior Court of California, County of Riverside  
4050 Main Street  
Riverside, California 92501

Subject: 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report: Suicide: A Tragedy Affecting All of Us—Riverside County Data & Local Resources

47-110 CALHOUN STREET  
INDIO, CALIFORNIA  
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Dear Judith C. Clark, Presiding Judge:

This letter is in response to the findings and recommendations provided to the Riverside County Office of Education in the Grand Jury Report: Suicide: A Tragedy Affecting All of Us—Riverside County Data & Local Resources in accordance with Penal Code Section 933 et seq.

### **RESPONSE TO FINDINGS**

Finding F4: *The Civil Grand Jury finds that 988, the newly established Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, diverts Riverside calls through the Los Angeles County call center. Upon identifying as a Riverside resident, the caller is referred to a secondary number. Though interpretation into over 240 languages and dialects is marketed as available 24/7 with average time to be connected to an interpreter within 17 seconds, this was not our experience when requesting interpretation.*

Response: The Riverside County Office of Education agrees with the finding. The Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition (SPC), an RCOE partner, is working on the recommendations for improving the 988 hotline. Furthermore, RCOE has met with Riverside County school districts and charter schools regarding regulations such as SB 316 as related to providing the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and other suicide prevention and emergency response telephone numbers.

### **RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendation R7: *The Civil Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and Riverside County of Education partner to:*

1. *Collect more delineated Riverside County specific suicide data.*
2. *Continue to place more mental health care services in school and community settings.*
3. *Enhance partnerships between schools and County programs.*
4. *Be fully aware of the limitations of 988 as a resource until services are more operational, and work with the Los Angeles County call center to improve 988 service to Riverside County residents.*

Response: The Riverside County Office of Education agrees with the recommendation.

1. RCOE is partnering with the Riverside University Health System (RUHS) Public Health division on a California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Pilot Project with the goal of developing and testing models for rapid reporting and comprehensive crisis response at the local level related to youth suicide and suicide attempts in youth 25 and under.

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2. The RCOE Mental Health Initiative is aimed at addressing the needs of the whole student beyond the classroom by supporting and expanding mental health programs and services within the 23 school districts in Riverside County. Part of the Mental Health Initiative is the establishment of CAREspaces to provide mental health and related services to students, families, schools, and the community of Riverside County. Also, RCOE received \$20 million over 5 years from the federal School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program to increase the number of licensed mental health services providers providing school-based mental health services directly to students.
3. RCOE participates with many partners:
  - a. Two RCOE staff serve as co-chairs for the Engaging Schools sub-committee for the Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition (SPC), with the goal of enhancing partnerships with schools to standardize policies and curriculum to promote connectedness and address suicide risk. Also, RCOE partners with RUHS on multiple projects to enhance youth mental health services:
    - i. Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Centers to reach out to youth transitioning from adolescent services to adulthood ages 16-18 and ages 18-25.
    - ii. Offering trauma-informed care and suicide prevention trainings for school and district staff.
    - iii. The Directing Change Program and Film Contest, which is part of statewide efforts to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and to promote the mental health and wellness of students.
    - iv. Funding a clinical therapist at RCOE through the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) grant.
  - b. RCOE convenes monthly meetings for District Child Welfare and Attendance/Student Services Staff where information on new legislation, district best practices, policies and procedural updates, and presentations are shared with district officials responsible for the implementation of regulations such as SB 316, which requires districts to place suicide hotline numbers on student ID cards.
    - i. During a discussion of this law and district best practices, the district officials shared that the vendors they use for annual school photos that print their ID cards have developed templates with the hotline numbers embedded.
    - ii. Additionally every March, RCOE sends a template developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education for use when creating the districts' Annual Notification to Parents that addresses the required notice to parents and students about their Suicide Prevention policies. It also serves as a reminder of the requirements to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and all students receive suicide prevention education.
4. RCOE is not directly involved in the administration of 988 services; however, in partnership with RUHS-Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition (SPC) we have collectively recognized obstacles and have worked to mediate these through the inclusion of local supports, resources, and contacts. These include access to the Cares Line, Suicide Lifeline/HELpline, Resources, and Local 24/7 Mental Health Urgent Care.

Sincerely,



Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.  
Riverside County  
Superintendent of Schools

EG:cmv