

Subject: Behavioral Health Referral Protocols Grade 7-12

Approved By: Board of Directors

Policy: 5029.2



☒ **HARBOR SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL**

Effective Date: February 12, 2026

Revised Date: February 12, 2026

☒ **VISTA SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL**

Effective Date: February 12, 2026

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☒ **PACIFIC SPRINGS CHARTER SCHOOL**

Effective Date: February 12, 2026

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Legal Reference: California Education Code (EC) Section 49428.2

The Governing Board of Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School 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 stakeholders and school-linked behavioral health professionals. It establishes the adopted procedures relating to referrals to behavioral health professionals and support services to ensure timely and effective support for students.

1) Addressing the Needs of High-Risk Groups

The Governing Board recognizes the importance of ensuring equitable access to behavioral health supports for all students. The Board hereby adopts this policy to specifically address the needs of high-risk pupil groups, which include but are not limited to:

- 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.

2) Coordination of Care

The Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School Senior Director of Student Support Services or designee shall oversee the mental and behavioral health needs of students is responsible for coordinating the implementation of these group-specific referral protocols. This coordination

shall be done in collaboration with the Director of Special Education (IEP/504), Foster Youth Liaison, Homeless Liaison, and Schoolsite administrators.

3) Local Discretion

School leadership may also identify additional pupil groups at local discretion—such as English learners or recently immigrated students—if local data or partner input demonstrates increased behavioral health risks within the student population.

4) Student Privacy

Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School recognizes and agrees to abide by all federal and state student data privacy laws and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (**FERPA**) and **EC Section 49073**, et seq.

The School must comply with these regulations in connection with:

1. This policy on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns.
2. The implementation of its policy and protocols, including any subsets listed below.

5) 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:

A. Needs Assessment

The Superintendent or designee shall conduct an annual needs assessment to:

- Identify behavioral health trends among the student body.
- Review currently available resources.
- Detect service gaps within the school community.

Each schoolsite/resource center shall review referral volume, response times, and outcomes on a quarterly basis and submit findings to Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School administration for continuous improvement.

B. Capacity Building

Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School shall:

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

C. Planning

The Superintendent or designee shall:

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

D. Implementation

Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School shall establish step-by-step procedures to:

1. Initiate referrals.
2. Document concerns formally.
3. Notify parents/guardians consistent with the law.
4. Triage the level of need.
5. Link pupils to appropriate services.
6. Schedule follow-up checks.

E. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The School shall conduct an annual evaluation of referral protocols that includes:

- Data collection and analysis.
- Input from staff, families, and community stakeholders.
- Targeted improvements based on results.

Metrics - Evaluation monitors outcomes such as:

- Median time to first contact.
- Percentage of follow-ups completed within ten school days.
- Referral closure rates.
- Results for the pupil groups identified in EC Section 49428.2(b)(3).

A summary of results shall be reported to the Governing Board annually to support transparency and continuous improvement.

F. Training Requirements

Mandatory Training

Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School shall ensure that teachers of pupils in grades 7–12 receive training on pupil behavioral health. Training materials approved by the School shall include:

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

Optional Elements

Training may also include recognizing the signs and symptoms of youth behavioral health disorders.

Certification to CDE

Subject to EC Section 49428.2(d), Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School shall certify, on or before **July 1, 2029**, to the California Department of Education (CDE) that:

- **100 percent** of its certificated employees; and
- **40 percent** of its classified employees who have direct contact with pupils in grades 7–12;

Have received youth behavioral health training at least once, in accordance with EC Section 49428.2(c)(1)–(5).

(Note: The School may meet the requirements of EC Section 49428.2(c) through an alternative approach if it adopts a policy describing how that approach is consistent with the goals specified in the code but better meets the needs of pupils.)

6) Authorization and Scope of Practice

In order to ensure that all school employees act only within the authorization or scope of their credential or license, Harbor, Vista and Pacific Springs Charter School shall:

1. **Guidance:** Provide training and guidance to staff clarifying their roles in the referral process and the limits of their credential or license.
2. **Referral Requirement:** Direct employees to refer pupils to appropriately credentialed or licensed professionals when behavioral health concerns are identified.
3. **Protocol Maintenance:** Maintain referral protocols that specify which staff positions are authorized to act at each stage of the referral process.
4. **Job Description Review:** Review job descriptions and assignments to confirm they align with credentialing and licensing requirements.
5. **Prohibition on Diagnosis:** Inform staff clearly that only licensed or credentialed professionals are permitted to diagnose or treat behavioral health conditions.

Legal Disclaimer

Consistent with EC 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.