

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Attachment: Information**

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**PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Date:**

**02.09.16**

**TO:** Max McGee, Superintendent

**FROM:** Holly Wade, Chief Student Services Officer

**PREPARED BY:** Brenda Carrillo, Director of Student Services

**SUBJECT:** Update on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention

### **STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE**

Governance and Communications

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This is an information item and requires no board action. This item is included in the agenda to update the Board on the important issue of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention investigation of the suicide clusters or Epi-Aid in Palo Alto. Key district and county staff is available to answer Board member questions.

### **BACKGROUND**

In March 2015 the District requested the support of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (PHD), for an Epi-Aid to address the issue of youth suicides in Palo Alto. An Epi-Aid is a mechanism that allows for a rapid response by CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officers, to investigate a public health emergency. The objective of an epi-aid is to describe patterns and trends related to a health issue, and associations between the health issue and various determinants, as well as to make practical recommendations for actions to mitigate the health problem. Subsequently, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a formal request for urgent epidemiological assistance from the CDC on behalf of the Santa Clara County PHD to understand youth suicide in Santa Clara County, and data permitting, Palo Alto School District.

The Epi-Aid has four major goals, which include:

1. Characterize epidemiology of, and trends in, fatal and non-fatal suicide suicidal behaviors among youth (ages 10-24) occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County;
2. Examine degree to which media coverage of youth suicides occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County met safe reporting guidelines for suicides;
3. Inventory and compare youth suicide prevention policies, activities, and protocols used in community to evidence-based and national recommendations;
4. Make recommendations on youth suicide prevention strategies at the school, city, and county level.

The CDC is currently involved in preparation efforts in collaboration with the PHD. The CDC will be engaging in fieldwork with key stakeholder groups from February 16-29th, 2016. Focus groups will be held with groups who can speak to suicide prevention efforts and policies across Santa Clara County, the City of Palo Alto and Palo Alto School District. Follow up efforts will include analysis of data collected and generation of a final report to be disseminated with key organizations.

# EPI-AID ON YOUTH SUICIDE IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

2/5/2016

An Overview

Santa Clara County Public Health Department



# Outline

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# What is an “Epi-Aid”?

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- Investigation of an urgent public health problem
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assists state and local public health officials in these investigations
- Goal is to determine causes and extent of the problem, develop prevention and control recommendations
- Public health response, not a research study
  - More flexible
  - Uses existing data sources and epidemiologic methods
  - Focused on identifying ways to reduce risk for suicidal behavior by addressing factors at the individual, family, and community levels

# How was this Epi-Aid initiated?

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- From 2009 through 2015, there were a number of suicides among incoming, current, or alumni members in one school district in Palo Alto (Santa Clara County)
- In response, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a formal request to the CDC for assistance, on behalf of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD)
- The CDC, in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), will provide this assistance to the CDPH and SCCPHD through conducting an Epi-Aid investigation

# Epi-Aid Objectives (Santa Clara County)

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- Characterize the epidemiology and trends in fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviors, youth ages 10-24 in Santa Clara County (2008-2015)<sup>1</sup>
  - Data permitting, compare characteristics at multiple levels, such as school districts and cities
- Examine the degree to which media coverage of youth suicides occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California, met safe reporting guidelines for suicides
- Inventory and compare youth suicide prevention policies, activities, and protocols used in the community to evidence-based and national recommendations
- Make recommendations on prevention strategies that can be used at the school, city, and county level

<sup>1</sup>Epidemiological investigations usually have the objective of describing patterns and trends related to a disease in a population and examining associations between the disease and various determinants. This Epi-Aid, for example, will describe trends in fatal and non-fatal suicide behavior among youth and identify risk and protective factors.

# Components of the Epi-Aid

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- **Short-term assistance**, but can span several months
- **Preparation** (December-January)
  - Planning, developed objectives
  - Data acquisition
  - Engaged with community organizations and agencies
- **Field work** (February 16-29, dates subject to change)
  - Prepare and analyze existing datasets
  - Conduct informal meetings with community organizations about suicide prevention strategies being implemented at the county and local level
- **Follow-up** (timeline TBD)
  - Continued analysis at the CDC/SAMHSA offices
  - Brief preliminary report (shortly after field work)
  - Final report
  - Report dissemination and use

## **CDC/SAMHSA**

- Provide technical assistance and subject matter expertise
- Draft objectives based on SCCPHD/community input
- Analyze existing data and review data sources for relevance
- Conduct media scan and suicide prevention activity/policy review
- Meet with local organizations and agencies
- Draft report and make recommendations

## **SCCPHD**

- Gain access to datasets for CDC/SAMHSA
- Serve as liaison between CDC/SAMHSA and the community
- Host CDC/SAMHSA during field visit
- Review reports
- Work with community on dissemination

# Data sources (examples)

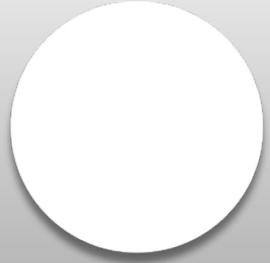
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- Use existing quantitative datasets, generally specific to Santa Clara County:
  - Coroner's data
  - Vital statistics (death files)
  - Emergency department and hospitalization data
  - School surveys
  - EMS/911
- Epi-Aids can include existing local data sources:
  - Need to receive by one month after conclusion of field work (end of March)
  - CDC/SAMHSA will review for relevance to the objectives

# Activities that will not be part of this Epi-Aid

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- ❑ This Epi-Aid will not include new data collection (e.g., new surveys, interviews, or focus groups)
- ❑ Epi-Aids use epidemiologic methods; they do not utilize methods like psychological autopsies
- ❑ As a result, this Epi-Aid will not provide information or details about individual deaths



Santa Clara County  
**PUBLIC**  
**HEALTH**

BETTER HEALTH FOR ALL

# Epi-Aid on Youth Suicide in Santa Clara County, CA

## Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

### What is an Epi-Aid?

- An Epi-Aid is an investigation of an urgent public health problem. Epidemic Intelligence Service Officers (EISOs) and subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) assist state and local public health officials in these investigations.
- The focus of Epi-Aids is to try to determine the cause(s) and/or extent of a specific health problem and to develop prevention and control recommendations.
- An Epi-Aid investigating youth suicide would take a public health approach, focused on identifying ways to reduce people's risk for suicidal behavior by addressing factors at the individual, family, community, and society levels. This approach aims to track trends and identify risk and protective factors.

### How was the Epi-Aid on youth suicide in Santa Clara County initiated?

- From 2009 through 2015, there were a number of suicides among incoming, current, or alumni members in one school district in Palo Alto, in Santa Clara County. In response, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) requested urgent epidemiological assistance from the CDC to understand youth suicide in Santa Clara County, and, data permitting, in the affected cities and school districts.
- The CDC, in partnership with SAMHSA, will provide this assistance to the CDPH and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD) through conducting an Epi-Aid investigation.

### What are the objectives of this Epi-Aid?

- Characterize the epidemiology of, and trends in, fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviors among youth occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California.<sup>1</sup>
  - Data permitting, compare characteristics at multiple levels, such as school districts and cities.
- Examine the degree to which media coverage of youth suicides occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California, met safe reporting guidelines for suicides.
- Inventory and compare youth suicide prevention policies, activities, and protocols used in the community to evidence-based and national recommendations.
- Synthesize information from objectives 1-3 to make recommendations on youth suicide prevention strategies that can be used at the school, city, and county level.

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<sup>1</sup> Epidemiological investigations usually have the objective of describing patterns and trends related to a disease in a population and examining associations between the disease and various determinants.

### **How long would this Epi-Aid last?**

- Epi-Aids provide short-term assistance for urgent public health problems.
- There are three parts, which altogether can span several months: 1) preparation, 2) field work (when the CDC/SAMSHA team comes to Santa Clara County and Palo Alto), and 3) follow-up (continued analyses at the CDC/SAMSHA offices).
- The proposed dates for field work for this Epi-Aid are February 16 through February 29, 2016. These dates are subject to change.

### **What data sources will be used in the investigation?**

- The purpose of an Epi-Aid is to utilize existing data to develop specific prevention and control recommendations.
- As this Epi-Aid focuses on youth suicide in Santa Clara County, data sources will generally be specific to Santa Clara County, and will be as comprehensive as possible given the short-term nature of this investigative method. SCCPHD is currently working to give the CDC/SAMHSA team access to existing data sources for the investigation.
- However, SCCPHD is making efforts to obtain existing data for nearby counties, such as San Mateo, that can be used to make cross-county comparisons.
- There is flexibility in what existing data sources can be included in the investigation. If community stakeholders have existing data they own and would like to share, they can provide these data to SCCPHD until up to one month after the end of the field visit.

### **What is the role of the CDC/SAMHSA team on this Epi-Aid?**

- SCCPHD and the CDC/SAMHSA are working in collaborative partnership to conduct this Epi-Aid. The CDC/SAMHSA team's role is to provide technical assistance and subject matter expertise, which will include analysis of available data and the development of prevention and control recommendations. These components will be carried out by Epidemic Intelligence Service Officers and subject matter experts from the CDC and SAMHSA.

### **What types of activities will this Epi-Aid include?**

- Epi-Aid investigations utilize primarily an epidemiological approach. Epidemiological investigations usually have the objective of describing patterns and trends related to a disease in a population and examining associations between the disease and various determinants.
- This Epi-Aid will use existing quantitative datasets, such as vital statistics, emergency department and hospital data, and school survey data.
- This Epi-Aid will include 1) a description of fatal and non-fatal suicide behavior among youth, including describing trends over time and identifying risk and protective factors 2) a media scan to examine the degree to which media coverage met safe reporting guidelines for suicides and 3) stakeholder meetings in Palo Alto and with other key stakeholders in the county.

- For each data source, we will attempt to compare Palo Alto to other cities within the county. The extent to which we will be able to do so depends on the data available.

**What types of activities will not be part of this Epi-Aid?**

- Epi-Aids primarily use epidemiologic methods. For this Epi-Aid we will not be collecting new data through surveys, conducting in-depth interviews or focus groups, or performing psychological autopsies.
- Because we are using a population level approach we will not be able to provide information or details about individual suicide deaths.

**What happens after an Epi-Aid?/What are the products of an Epi-Aid?**

- The Epi-Aid team will prepare a brief, preliminary report on the investigation shortly after field work and then a comprehensive report including final findings and recommendations. The CDC/SAMHSA team will take the lead in preparing the reports, with SCCPHD providing feedback, comments, and suggestions (based on discussions with community stakeholders) along the way.
- SCCPHD, working with community stakeholders, will decide how these reports are used and disseminated.

# Project Safety Net

Update on CDC Epi-Aid and Field Visit (February 16-29, 2016)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are scheduled to be in Santa Clara County and Palo Alto from February 16-29 to conduct the field work component of what is called an “Epi-Aid” investigation of youth suicide in the county. An Epi-Aid is an investigation of an urgent public health problem in a community or state. An Epi-Aid can occur when the CDC receives a request for assistance from a state public health department to better understand what may be causing a public health problem and what may be some prevention steps that could be taken. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) requested Epi-Aid assistance from the CDC, on behalf of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD). An Epi-Aid investigation has three parts, which altogether can span several months: 1) preparation, 2) field work (when the CDC/SAMSHA team comes to Santa Clara County and Palo Alto), and 3) follow-up (continued analyses at the CDC/SAMSHA offices).

For more information about what is included in an “Epi-Aid” go to [www.psnpalto.com](http://www.psnpalto.com).

The objectives of the Epi-Aid in Santa Clara County will include:

1. Characterize the epidemiology of, and trends in, fatal and non-fatal suicidal behaviors among youth occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California.
  - a. Data permitting, compare characteristics at multiple levels, such as school districts and cities.
2. Examine the degree to which media coverage of youth suicides occurring from 2008 through 2015 in Santa Clara County, California, met safe reporting guidelines for suicide.
3. Inventory and compare youth suicide prevention policies, activities, and protocols used in the community to evidence-based and national recommendations.
4. Synthesize information from objectives 1-3 to make recommendations on youth suicide prevention strategies that can be used at the school, city, and county level.

During the field visit, the CDC/SAMHSA will review existing data from a variety of sources, as well as conduct meetings with stakeholder groups in Palo Alto and the county to discuss suicide prevention activities and policies. SCCPHD is working with the CDC/SAMHSA, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), the City of Palo Alto, and Project Safety Net representatives to identify key stakeholder groups. These meetings will be conducted to help the Epi-Aid team understand the local context as well as suicide prevention activities and policies that are currently in place, in order to inform recommendations on how to improve such efforts in the final Epi-Aid report.

The CDC conducted a similar Epi-Aid investigation in 2014 for Fairfax County, VA following a youth suicide cluster. The link to the final report can be found at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/suicide](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/suicide). However, each Epi-Aid investigation is different, depending on the community and the available data.

For more information, go [www.psnpalalto.com](http://www.psnpalalto.com)