



A Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention in Schools

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Four Reasons for Suicide Prevention In Schools

1. Maintaining a safe school environment is part of a school's overall mission.
2. Students' mental health can affect their academic performance.
3. A student suicide can significantly impact other students and the entire school community
4. Schools have been sued for negligence for the following reasons
 - Failure to notify parents if their child appears to be suicidal
 - Failure to get assistance for a student at risk of suicide
 - Failure to adequately supervise a student at risk of suicide

(Doan, Roggenbaum, & Lazear, 2003; Juhnke, Granello, & Granello, 2011; Lieberman, 2008–2009; Lieberman, Poland, & Cowan, 2006):

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

- Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents are generally required to provide consent before school officials disclose personally identifiable information from students' education records.
- Exceptions
 - Disclosures in connection with health or safety emergencies

Permits school officials to disclose information on students, without consent, to appropriate parties to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

If a student is believed to be suicidal or has expressed suicidal thoughts, school officials may determine that a significant threat to the health or safety of the student exists and that such a disclosure to appropriate parties is warranted

School Connectedness

- Teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment
- Providing students with the academic, emotional, and social skills
- Creating decision-making processes engaging students
- Creating trusting and caring relationships
- Providing professional development and support for teachers

How Schools Can Help Prevent Suicide

Two Essentials Components

- Protocols for helping students at possible risk of suicide
- Protocols for responding to a suicide death (and thus preventing additional suicides)

Protocols for helping students at risk of suicide

- Helping students who may be at risk of suicide
- Responding to students who attempt suicide at school
- Agreements with community providers to provide behavioral health services to students

Protocols for responding to suicide death

- Steps to take after the suicide or traumatic death of a student
- Staff assigned for responding to these steps
- Understanding community partners to help in the event of a suicide

Staff education and training

- Information about the importance of suicide prevention for all staff
- Training, for all staff, on recognizing and responding to students who may be at risk
- Training, for appropriate staff, on assessing, referring, and following up with students identified as at risk of suicide.

Parent education

- Information for parents about suicide and related behavioral health issues
- Strategies to engage parents in suicide prevention programs
- Suicide Prevention programs for parents

Student education

- One or more programs to engage students in suicide prevention NREPP or SPRC
- Integration of suicide prevention into other student healthy behavioral health initiatives

The Order of Suicide Prevention

- Protocols for referrals developed
- Educating staff (early recognition)
- Providing referral protocols to all faculty
- Provide staff with referral resources
- Educating parents
- Educating students
- Creating district crisis plan

STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

1. Engage administrators, school boards, and other key players
2. Bring people together to start the planning process
3. Provide key players with basic information about youth suicide and suicide prevention.
4. Develop your overall strategy
5. Choose program/programs

Resources

- Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools

<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4669/SMA12-4669Flyer.pdf>

- After a suicide: A toolkit for schools

<http://www.sprc.org/webform/after-suicide-toolkit-schools>