

Schools and Suicide Prevention Resources*

Center for School Mental Health



School –Suicide Prevention Policy:

Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide <http://theguide.fmhi.usf.edu/>

The Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide is designed to provide accurate, user-friendly information. The Guide is not a program but a tool that provides a framework for schools to assess their existing or proposed suicide prevention efforts (through a series of checklists) and provides resources and information that school administrators can use to enhance or add to their existing program.

General recommendations include:

- Train staff and faculty about adolescent suicide (Identifying the at-risk student, determine level of risk, where to refer students to treatment, and learning what school policies are in place in case of a suicide crisis situation).
- Establish agreements between other members of the community (police, clergy, and mental health services) that outline prevention services that will be assigned to the school.
- A suicide curriculum included throughout the year that teaches correct knowledge about suicide, identifying another student at risk, encourages students to seek help and providing students with a number of resources that they can use if they need help or they think a peer needs help.
- Educating parents (coupling suicide training with drug prevention and how to restrict access to firearms).
- Curriculum that focuses on educating students on proper social and coping skills, problem solving strategies and help-seeking skills.
- Peer support groups that allow a student to meet with another peer in a comfortable environment.
- Using screening techniques that typically consist of directly asking students directly about feelings of depression, feelings of suicide and identifying risk factors for suicide.
- Maintain a positive and safe school climate.

Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/documents/suicideprev.doc>

The California Department of Education developed this resource to be available online to help schools recognize the behavior and other indicators of potentially suicidal youth and to reduce the incidence of suicidal behavior. Additionally, this resource can help schools to cope with, and effectively respond to, suicide crises.

- Uses a multidimensional approach that incorporates a full spectrum of interventions from multiple community partners.

- Increases *access* to social services by young people, who generally underuse services and who could benefit the most from prevention and early intervention support.
- Engages young people and develops appropriate responses to their needs (i.e., focusing on communication and challenging negative assumptions about young people).
- Uses interventions that are effective with young people (i.e., adequately holistic interventions that address all systems affecting the young person's health and welfare).

Suicide Prevention for Schools

<http://suicideandmentalhealthassociationinternational.org/preventionteachers.html>

SMHAI is dedicated to suicide and mental health related issues. Their main goal is to prevent suicidal behavior and to relieve its effects on all who maybe affected by it.

General Recommendations

- It is essential to secure the well-being and balance of teachers and other school staff.
- Introduce training in life skills, first by visiting experts and later as part of the regular curriculum.
- Children and adolescents should be taught to take their own feelings seriously and encouraged to confide in parents and other trusted adults.
- Specific skills should be available in the education system to prevent bullying and violence in and around the school premises.
- The availability of specific services should be ensured by widely publicizing the telephone numbers of, for example, crisis and emergency help lines and psychiatric emergency numbers.
- The education system should also enhance the development and consolidation of every student's sense of identity.

General Resources:

Helpful Forms (Safety Contracts [Elementary/Middle and High School versions] and Suicide Assessment Form):

Several forms developed by the Center for School Mental Health and the University of Maryland School Mental Health Program may be helpful for providers needing to assess suicidality and contract for safety. All of the forms can be accessed from the School Mental Health Connection website (www.schoolmentalhealth.org) under the section Helpful forms,

<http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Helpful%20Forms/hlpfulforms.html>.

Check out the links for "Suicide Assessment Form," "Suicide Safety Agreement," and "Suicide Safety Contract." The safety contracts represent one component of a comprehensive clinical treatment and should not be used as the sole mechanism for treatment.

Youth Suicide Prevention Website <http://www.youthsuicide.ca/>

This website is aimed towards teens and their parents. For parents and adults, it gives suggestions on what to say if they observe the suicidal risk signs in their children. For youth, it gives suggestions on what to say and who to call if a friend is contemplating suicide.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center <http://www.sprc.org>

SPRC.org is the home of over 490 web pages and 250 library resources on suicide prevention information. Visitors to the website can find a range of information from suicide prevention and mental health news to strategic tools for developing suicide prevention programs. The site includes individual state suicide prevention pages, news and events, an online library, training, and links to other web sites.

Recommendations from SPRC suicide prevention programs

- Clearly define the problem, by collecting data and other information.
- Identify risk and protective factors. Risk factors are associated with (or lead to) suicides and suicide attempts. Protective factors reduce the likelihood of suicide.
- Develop and test interventions. Most interventions seek to reduce risk factors and/or enhance protective factors. Such preventive measures should be scientifically tested to determine if they actually work before being disseminated and implemented.
- Implement interventions.
- Evaluate effectiveness. Suicide prevention programs should always be evaluated to verify that they are working and to understand how to make them more effective in the particular situation in which they are being used.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) <http://www.save.org>

The mission of SAVE is to prevent suicide through public awareness and education, reduce stigma and serve as a resource to those touched by suicide. SAVE's prevention and education programs are designed to:

- Increase knowledge about depression, other brain illnesses and the need for assessment and treatment as suicide prevention.
- Increase knowledge about symptoms of depression and the warning signs of suicidal thinking and behavior.
- Increase understanding and the use of intervention skills that can help avoid the tragedy of suicide.
- Increase knowledge about community resources and how to access and use them.

Suicide Prevention: Spotting the Signs and Helping a Suicidal Person

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/suicide_prevention.htm

Helpguide's mission is to help people understand, prevent, and resolve many of life's challenges. The website lists the signs of suicidal ideation, the federal funded hotline number and resources for teens, families and administrators.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is a 24-hour, toll free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. By dialing 1-800-273-TALK, the call is routed to the nearest crisis center in our national network of more than 140 crisis centers. The Lifeline's national network of local crisis centers, provide crisis counseling and mental health referrals day and night.

Stop A Suicide Today! <http://www.stopasuicide.org/index.aspx>

This website includes facts on suicide, signs of suicide, how to prevent a suicide, the link between suicide and mental illness and stories from survivors and professionals. A good website aimed at older children or young adults.

Stop Youth Suicide <http://www.stopyouthsuicide.com/>

Since the SYS campaign began in October 2000, fourteen adolescent lives have been documented as saved, emergency room visits for suicide attempts in two local hospitals are down from 200 to 120 per year, and the total number of completed suicides has declined by 20% over the last five years in Fayette County. The SYS Web site also serves as a resource, providing phone numbers to crisis lines, which have been heavily utilized by teens

Yellow Ribbon- For the Prevention of Teen Suicide <http://www.yellowribbon.org/>

Yellow Ribbon is a community-based program that empowers and educates professionals, adults and youth. Yellow Ribbon cards are distributed and carried as a simple, effective tool to use to ask for help when feelings of suicide arise.

The Trevor Project <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/home1.aspx>

The Trevor Project is a national organization focused on crisis and suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The non profit organization offers a hotline for LGBTQ youth.

Examples of State Suicide Prevention Programs and Policies:

Youth Suicide Prevention Programs In Washington State <http://www.yspp.org/>

The YSPP mission is to reduce youth suicide attempts and deaths in Washington State. Working toward that goal, they build public awareness, offer training, and support communities taking action. There are many resources for schools, teachers and parents. There are also examples of successful prevention models. The areas of action and what the state can do related policies are compiled by goal:

[Goal 1 — Suicide is recognized as everyone's business.](#)

[Goal 2 — Youth ask for and get help when they need it.](#)

[Goal 3 — People know what to look for and how to help.](#)

[Goal 4 — Care is available for those who seek it.](#)

[Goal 5 — Suicide is recognized as a preventable public health problem.](#)

Florida Office of Drug Control, Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council <http://www.helppromotehope.com/strategy/index.php>

The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention, in collaboration with the Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council, coordinates Florida's suicide prevention efforts by developing mechanisms for implementing the *Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy*, providing oversight, building capacity, creating policy, and mobilizing communities, with the overall goal of lowering suicides and improving quality of life.

- Raise awareness and disseminate information about the risk factors and warning signs associated with suicide.

- Debunk myths about suicide that lead to greater risk of suicide or hinder its prevention.
- Implement prevention, intervention, and treatment activities that are effective in prevention of suicide and suicide attempts.
- Mitigate risk among potential suicides by reducing access to lethal means.
- Provide training to gatekeepers and first responders on intervention skills in threatening situations.
- Implement screening systems to help identify those at risk for suicide.

Federal Resources:

Youth Suicide Prevention Programs: A Resource Guide

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/youthsui.htm>

This resource guide describes the rationale and evidence for the effectiveness of various youth suicide prevention strategies and identifies model programs that incorporate these various strategies. The guide is for use by persons interested in developing or augmenting suicide prevention programs in their own communities.

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calltoaction/calltoaction.htm>

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide outlines more than a dozen steps that can be taken by individuals, communities, organizations, and policymakers.

- Effective and appropriate clinical care for mental, physical, and substance abuse disorders
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking
- Restricted access to highly lethal methods of suicide
- Family and community support
- Support from ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
- Learned skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent handling of disputes
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation instincts

National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives for Action

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SMA01-3517/>

The strategy lays out a framework for action to prevent suicide and guides the development of an array of services and programs.

Professional Organization Resources:

National Association of School Psychologists President's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide

<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/suicidecalltoaction.aspx>

This is a call to action to prevent suicide by the president of the National Association of School Psychologists. In the statement, there are many suggestions as to what schools and school psychologists can do to ensure that they are doing all that they can to prevent student suicide.

- School districts must be encouraged to ensure that they have effective policies and procedures in place to respond effectively to suicidal youth.
- Provide workshops for school staff members and community members on topics related to suicidal behaviors (e.g., risk and protective factors, identifying suicidal youth, myths surrounding suicide, policies and procedures, mobilizing a support system, and legal and ethical issues).
- Help to teach students how to respond helpfully to at-risk, depressed, or suicidal classmates and demonstrate how to contact a caring adult if they suspect a friend is considering suicide.
- Advocate for prevention strategies and programs that are culturally sensitive to the unique subcultures within the school community.
- Encourage collaboration among teachers, nurses, and mental health personnel, including suicide prevention education in the classroom curriculum.
- Develop a peer assistance program.
- If a student is hospitalized due to suicidal behavior, it is important for schools to develop a reentry plan when the student returns to school.
- Crisis postvention plans (addressing the unique feelings of loss associated with suicide, preventing possible contagion effects, and expanding prevention efforts by maintaining a safe, secure, and positive school climate). Enhance individual sense of connection to schools and communities through provision of opportunities and reinforcement for participation and contribution.
- Promote social norms of caring and mutual support.
- Work with parents and school staff to reduce access to lethal means at home and in school.
- Identify and appropriately maintain records of all students who experience suicidal ideation, make suicidal threats, or engage in attempts.
- Where appropriate and feasible, conduct screenings for depression and suicide.
- Monitor the progress of students who display suicidal behavior.
- Connect suicidal individuals with immediate help.

Teen Suicide is Preventable <http://www.apa.org/research/action/suicide.aspx>

This is a webpage created by the American Psychological Association in order to inform the general public about suicide and the warning signs of suicidal ideation. It also showcases many of the resources available for teens and those who interact with them.

Some Things You Should Know About Preventing Teen Suicide

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/childhealthmonth/prevteensuicide.htm>

This web page from the American Academy of Pediatrics share information on how to identify suicidal signs and how to approach a teenager who might be displaying them.

National Association of Social Workers <http://www.helpstartshere.org/tag/prevention>

This website contains resources that outline the current trends in suicide, offer suicide prevention tips, and highlight some of the policies and models that have been successfully implemented in schools.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

<http://www.aacap.org/galleries/LegislativeAction/SuicideH.PDF>

This statement from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Psychiatric Association was developed for the Senate Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Subcommittee of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Hearing on Suicide Prevention and Youth: Saving Lives (March 3, 2004). It provides information about prevalence, prevention, treatment and policy recommendations.

American Association of Suicidology <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/home>

This website has resources for clinicians, survivors and students. The main focus of the organization is to understand and prevent suicide.

American Counseling Association

<http://www.counseling.org/Publications/CounselingCorner.aspx?AGuid=94082a54-a45b-4318-8ddf-4cc681ff9c97>

This webpage from the American Counseling Association tries to dispel the myths that surround adolescent suicide, from speaking about it to recognizing the signs.

* July 2010, Compiled by Amanda Sommers & Nancy Lever, Center for School Mental Health