

To: Public School District Administrators, Private School Administrators, Interested Parties
From: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent
Division for Learning Support
Re: Notification of Youth Suicide Prevention Resources
Date: January 2016

Attached please find the Model Notice of Suicide Prevention Resources for 2016. Wisconsin Statute sec. 115.365 requires that, "Each school board and the governing body of each private school annually shall inform their professional staff of the resources available from the department and other sources regarding suicide prevention." It also requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to create a model notice for schools. This notice is attached and available for download, along with many other resources, on our website.

Unfortunately, due to inadequate participation, no weighted data is available from the 2015 administration of the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). However, data from the 2013 Wisconsin YRBS shows no difference in the percentage of students reporting themselves as clinically depressed across ten years (25 percent in 2003 and 2013). There has been a decline in the percentage of high school students who seriously considered attempting suicide; from 20 percent in 2003 to 13 percent in 2013. This is a significant downward trend; however, the percentage of students actually attempting suicide one or more times did not drop as significantly. The percentage of high school students attempting suicide in 2003 was 8 percent compared to 6 percent in 2013. At this point, our state youth suicide rate is the 14th highest in the nation; higher than both Minnesota and Illinois. There is more work to be done in suicide prevention, and we are making strides to overcome this problem. I encourage you to stay updated with DPI resources and/or participate in our highly-rated suicide prevention workshop.

Please share this model notice with all of your staff members; anyone who works with students must be able to recognize suicide warning signs and know how to quickly respond. You can easily customize the notice by including resources from your school, local mental health providers, county mental health services, crisis services, or local chapters of Mental Health America of Wisconsin (MHA), National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), and Helping Others Prevent and Educate about Suicide (HOPES). Since the model notice is not covered by copyright; you may put the notice on your district letterhead, make copies, or forward at will.

Please also consider assigning a district task force to be trained in school-based suicide prevention. DPI's suicide prevention workshop offers evidence-based strategies for universal, selected, and targeted prevention and intervention. The workshop has been very popular and well-received, but it will take an ongoing commitment to deal with this serious problem. Please join me in continuing our important work in youth suicide prevention.

CST:gcc

Attachment