



# State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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Date: April 2009

To: Public School District Administrators, Private School Administrators, Interested Parties

From: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent  
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

Re: Annual Notification of Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

With spring officially here, we want to share some critical information about youth suicide prevention. While most people believe that winter holidays are the most common time for depression and suicidal thinking, data show that **the most common months for self-inflicted injury among youth occur in the spring**. And, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control, Wisconsin continues to have the 13<sup>th</sup> highest rate of suicides for youth, ages 10-19, in the nation, and the fifth highest rate for youth ages 10-14. We lose an average of one youth each week to suicide; it is the second most common cause of death among youth, and is the cause of almost one in five deaths. Our challenges with youth suicide are continuing, and it will take the efforts of many adults to resolve these challenges.

Wisconsin state law, s. 115.365, Wis. Stats., "Assistance to schools for suicide prevention programs" 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. Consistent with this responsibility, this year's model notification is attached.

I encourage you to use this model notice with all of your staff members; anyone who has a relationship with a student should be able to recognize suicide warning signs and know how to respond. You can easily customize this model notice by including resources in your school and community. Please consider making contacts with, and providing information on, local mental health providers, your county mental health board and available crisis services, and local chapters of the organizations listed on the notice. None of the material is covered by copyright so you are free to put the notice on your district letterhead and to make copies or forward it electronically.

Please also consider assigning a district task force to use DPI's Toolkit for Suicide Prevention that is available in our suicide prevention workshop. We offer evidence-based strategies for universal, selected, and targeted intervention. The workshop has been very popular and well-received, but it will take additional resources and commitment to deal with this serious problem. Links to our suicide prevention page and workshop flyer are included on the model notice. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Attachment