

REQUIRED NOTICE OF YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

Because Wisconsin youth have been completing suicide at a high rate for many years, state law requires that school staff members be annually notified of DPI's youth suicide prevention resources.

Why should we worry about youth suicide? Are many kids really depressed or suicidal?

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth in Wisconsin.
- One in six deaths overall among Wisconsin youth are self-inflicted, one in five injury-related deaths.
- For youth ages 10-19, we have the 13th highest rate in the US, 42% higher than the U.S. average.
- For students ages 10-14, Wisconsin's suicide rate is fifth highest in the U.S.
- More than one in five Wisconsin high school students report symptoms of depression annually.

Suicide can be prevented—we're already making progress, but there is much more to do.

- Wisconsin has seen a downward trend in completed youth suicides from 2005-2007. This is very promising; school staffs are instrumental for continued support of prevention strategies.
- Mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety, usually contribute to attempted and completed suicides. These concerns are treatable, but they must be recognized.
- Everyone in a school community can identify and help students at risk for attempting suicide.

Early Warning Signs

- Decline in quality of school work
- Social withdrawal
- Personality and mood



URGENT WARNING SIGNS

- Threats about hurting self
- Talking about a specific plan
- Violent actions, rebellious behavior, running away
- Hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness

Common Suicide Myths & Realities

Myth: Asking a student how they are doing or if they have had thoughts about harming themselves will bring on thoughts of suicide.

Reality: Students are already thinking about and completing suicide. Carefully talking about the topic and getting students to help are keys to preventing suicide.

Myth: Students won't be honest when asked if they need help.

Reality: Students who are having thoughts about suicide are usually scared and want help. No one truly wants to die.

Myth: Only pupil service professionals can/should help a suicidal student.

Reality: Everyone in school can help prevent youth suicide by connecting students to appropriate helping professionals.

What can you do if you are concerned about a student?

Teachers and other school staff are well-positioned to observe student behavior and to **ACT** if there is a suspicion that a student may consider self-harm. Young people lack the perspective of time. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, but for kids, their problems can seem endless at this stage. If we get them through the crisis, there is a 90% chance that they will never attempt suicide. **ACT** stands for **Acknowledge, Care, and Tell**.

Acknowledge feelings rather than minimizing them.

- “I’m sorry to hear about this. It sounds really hard.”
- Telling a student to “get over it” or “move on” is not realistic for a person with depression.

Show Care and Concern for the student by taking the next step.

- “I’m worried about you. I don’t want anything bad to happen to you or for you to be hurt.”

Tell a member of your crisis team.

- “Let’s go talk with someone in the counseling office. They know how to work with students who have concerns like these.”

These steps (Acknowledge-Care-Tell) are a central component of the “Signs of Suicide” program (SOS), an evidence-based school-wide intervention program. SOS kits for middle school and high school are available through your local CESA.

State law protects school district employees and volunteers from civil liability for their acts and omissions when trying to intervene in a student’s suicide. It’s safe to ACT!

What youth suicide prevention resources are available from DPI?

DPI provides a wide variety of training and resources at: dpi.wi.gov/sspw/suicideprev.html

What other resources should school staff be aware of?

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, www.afsp.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, www.sprc.org
- Mental Health America of Wisconsin, www.mhawisconsin.org
- Helping Others Prevent and Educate about Suicide, www.hopes-wi.org



Local resources can be identified in telephone directories and/or your county mental health board. For more information about the data, suggestions, or background to this notice, please search “suicide prevention” on the DPI web page dpi.wi.gov. Revised April 2009 with the help of Adam Grieve, UW-Madison.