WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF Public Instruction

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WISCONSIN STATUTES AND ADMINISTRATIVE RULES RELATED TO SCHOOL-BASED SUICIDE PREVENTION

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This state law establishes that schools must address suicide prevention with students. Specifically: conditions that cause and signs of suicidal thinking, the relationship between suicide and the use of alcohol and other drugs, and services available in local communities.

WI 118.01 Educational goals and expectations.

(1) Purpose. Each school board should provide curriculum, course requirements and instruction consistent with the goals and expectations established under sub. (2). Parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in the school district share with the state and school board the responsibility for pupils meeting the goals and expectations under sub. (2).

(2) Educational Goals.

(d) ***Personal development:*** Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:

7. The skills needed to make sound decisions, knowledge of the conditions which may cause and the signs of suicidal tendencies, knowledge of the relationship between youth suicide and the use of alcohol and controlled substances under ch. 961 and knowledge of the available community youth suicide prevention and intervention services. Instruction shall be designed to help prevent suicides by pupils by promoting the positive emotional development of pupils.

This state law puts forth high school graduation requirements.

WI 118.33 Graduation Requirements

118.33(1)(a)2. In grades 7 to 12, at least 0.5 credits of health education.

This rule requires that suicide prevention instruction take place in the health curriculum. DPI encourages classroom collaboration between health educators and pupil services on this topic.

PI 8.01(2)(j)1

Health instruction shall…include the curricular areas defined in…115. 35 and 118.01 (2), Stats.

This law gives direction to DPI—we must train school staff to intervene in youth suicide. It also establishes a clear role for schools in screening for suicidal thinking (detection of signs…), crisis response (proper action…), and referrals to outside agencies and even law enforcement if the student is in crisis. Finally, it requires DPI to make a model annual notice for schools to inform staff about youth suicide prevention resources and directs districts to use DPI's model or make their own annual notice.

WI 115.365 Assistance to schools for suicide prevention programs.

(1) The purpose of this section is to enable and encourage public and private schools to develop programs designed to prevent suicide among minors.

(2) The department, in conjunction with the department of health services and the department of children and families, shall:

a) **Develop and conduct training programs in suicide prevention for the professional staff of public and private schools** and county departments under ss. 46.215, 46.22 and 51.42. The programs shall include information on **how to assist minors in the positive emotional development which will help prevent suicidal tendencies; the detection, by minors, school staff and parents, of conditions which indicate suicidal tendencies; the proper action to take when there is reason to believe that a minor has suicidal tendencies or is contemplating suicide; and the coordination of school suicide prevention programs and activities with the suicide prevention and intervention programs and activities of other state and local agencies.** Persons other than the professional staff of public and private schools and county departments under ss. 46.215, 46.22 and 51.42 may attend the training programs. The department may charge such persons a fee sufficient to cover the increased costs to the department of their participation in the programs.

b) **Provide consultation and technical assistance to public and private schools for the development and implementation of suicide prevention programs** and the coordination of those programs with the suicide prevention and intervention programs of other state and local agencies.

(3) 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. The department annually shall provide school boards and the governing bodies of private schools with a model notice, describing the suicide prevention services that it has developed and how staff may access those services, which school boards and governing bodies of private schools may use to inform their professional staff.

This law mandates a requirement for school boards or operators of a charter school under s. 118.40(2r) or (2x) who issue identification cards to pupils.

WI 118.169 Pupil Identification

> **(2) Identification Cards**
>
> *(a)* School boards or operators of a charter school under s. 118.40(2r) or (2x) who issue identification cards to pupils shall include the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or one of its affiliate crisis centers or another national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

This law establishes immunity from civil liability for acts or omissions in trying to intervene in youth suicide. School staff cannot be sued individually for attempting to help a student who may be suicidal. The Legislature thus encourages school staff to help students who may be suicidal.

WI 118.295 Suicide intervention; civil liability exemption.

Any school board, private school, county children with disabilities education board or cooperative educational service agency, and any officer, employee, or volunteer thereof, who in good faith attempts to prevent suicide by a pupil is immune from civil liability for his or her acts or omissions in respect to the suicide or attempted suicide. The civil liability immunity provided in this section is in addition to and not in lieu of that provided under s. 895.48 (1).

In summary, these laws and administrative rules are clear: Schools must educate students and staff about suicide prevention and DPI must support schools in that process.

Questions about this material can be directed to:

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