

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

From: Barbara Van Haren, PhD, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Learning Support 

Re: Notification of Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

Date: March 2019

Attached please find the Model Notice of Suicide Prevention Resources for 2019. 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 suicide prevention website found here: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/youth-suicide-prevention>.

Data from the 2017 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) present mixed results when it comes to youth suicide in our state. When compared to 2007 YRBS data, there has not been a statistically significant increase in the percentage of students who report seriously considering suicide. However, multiple indicators suggest work remains to be done to reduce youth suicide. From 2007 to 2017, there has been an increase in the percentage of high school students reporting themselves as clinically depressed (22% in 2007 and 27% 2017). Across those same ten years, there has also been a significant increase in the percentage of students who report that they have made a plan for ending their lives (10% in 2007 to 15% in 2017). Finally, while the overall percentage of high school students reporting they attempted suicide is statistically the same as 2007, the 2017 percentage of female students who report attempting suicide is 1 ½ times that of males (9% for females and 6% for males).

Obviously, work remains; and we are making strides to combat this problem. DPI is taking a deep dive into the statewide 2017 YRBS data to identify high-risk student populations and potential prevention and intervention points. In fact, a detailed suicide-specific report has been completed and can be found here: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/yrbssuicidehelpseeking.pdf>. YRBS reports on other topics related to student success can be found here: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrebs>. I encourage you to stay updated with this information, other DPI suicide prevention resources, and/or to participate in our highly-rated suicide prevention workshop. The workshop has been very popular and well-received, and it will take an ongoing commitment to deal with this serious problem.

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 respond quickly. Since this model notice is not covered by copyright, you can easily customize it 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). You may also put the notice on your district letterhead, make copies, or forward at will.

Please join me in continuing our important work in youth suicide prevention.

BVH:gcc
Attachment