

Date: February 2021

To: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators, Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

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

Re: Notification of Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

Attached please find the Model Notice of Suicide Prevention Resources for 2021. 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 2019 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) present mixed results regarding youth suicide in our state. When compared to 2009 YRBS data, there has not been a statistically significant increase in the percentage of students who reported seriously considering suicide. However, multiple indicators suggest work remains to be done to reduce youth suicide. From 2009 to 2019, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of high school students reporting themselves as clinically depressed (21 percent in 2009 and 28.5 percent in 2019). Across those same ten years, there has also been an increase in the percentage of students who report that they have made a plan for ending their lives (11 percent in 2009 to 13 percent in 2019). Finally, while the overall percentage of high school students reporting they attempted suicide is statistically the same as in 2009, the 2019 percentage of female students who report attempting suicide is over 1 ½ times that of males (9 percent for females and 5 percent for males).

Obviously, work remains; and we are making strides to combat this problem. DPI is taking a deep dive into the statewide 2019 YRBS data to identify high-risk student populations and potential prevention and intervention points. YRBS reports on other topics related to student success can be found here:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs>. In addition, county and Cooperative Educational Service Agency YRBS reports are available under the “County and Regional Results” section of the Conducting a YRBS webpage at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs/online>. I encourage you to stay updated with this information and other DPI suicide prevention resources.

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, and forward at will.

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

BVH:bd

Attachment