

Suicide Prevention Resources & Activities for Schools



Jen Ulie Wells [Follow](#)

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According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10–34 across the nation. Some states are facing suicide epidemics with rates rapidly rising without a decline in sight. For instance, in Iowa, 21% of youth have seriously thought about killing themselves in the last year. Given that students spend the majority of time in schools, it is advantageous for schools to be well-prepared in education, prevention, and mental health awareness.

Suicide Warning Signs (CDC, 2018)

It is very challenging for educators to be able to recognize a red flag without any training on what the warning signs of suicide are. Here are some signs that a child or adolescent may be having suicidal thoughts:

- Feeling like a burden
- Being isolated
- Increased anxiety
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for a way to access lethal means

- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Expressing hopelessness
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Talking or posting about wanting to die
- Making plans for suicide

Suicide Prevention Resources

- 1. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention**
- 2. National Education Association Crisis Guide**
- 3. Culturally Relevant Strategies for Suicide Prevention**

Suicide Prevention Plan Examples

- 1. Lassen County District California Suicide Awareness & Prevention Plan (Prevention, Intervention, Postvention, Student Risk Form, Guidelines for Contacting Parents)**

2. Shoreline School District Response Protocol for Suicide

Ideation(When a Student Verbalizes Suicidal Thoughts at School, Suicide Risk Screening Form, School Re-Entry Protocol, School Re-Entry Meeting Notes Form, School Safety Plan, Instructions for Teachers, Document for Parents with At-Risk Students)

3. San Mateo Schools California Suicide Prevention Protocol

(Prevention, Assessment, Action Plan, Documentation and Forms, Return to School Packet)

4. Developing Comprehensive Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Protocols: A Toolkit for Oregon Schools (Sample Suicide

Intervention Process, Sample Suicide Screener, Sample Safety Plan, Intervention, Postvention)

School & Classroom Activities for Suicide Prevention Month

World Suicide Prevention Month 2019 Suggested Activities

PBIS “In the Mix” Depression and Suicide Prevention

Teenmentalhealth.org (Author favorite)

National Students Against Violence Everywhere Suicide Prevention Activity

Kids Health

PBS: Suicide Prevention How Can Schools Help?

Cards for Kids

Suicide Prevention Week Toolkit

Remember that suicide prevention is one part of developing a strong school mental health system. Your students do not have to be in high school to start engaging in suicide prevention. In preschool, we can be explicitly teaching students how to identify feelings and social-emotional learning skills such as, “When I get frustrated, sometimes I need to ask to take a break to let my brain calm down.” Teaching social-emotional skills increase the likelihood of young people using healthy coping and communication skills when they need to use them.

Other helpful resources:

The Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning

Mental Health Lesson Plans for the Classroom

ASCD 12 Resources to Help You Address Mental Health in Your Classroom

Suicide in Schools: A Practitioner's Guide

I applaud the countless amazing educators that recognize that when we focus on the mental health of our students the positive outcomes are endless. Giving time to the social-emotional learning of our students doesn't have to be cumbersome, but it absolutely can be life-saving. Sometimes the smallest things can have the biggest results. You are changing and saving lives.

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