

A Culture of Caring

What School Leaders Need to Know About Suicide Prevention

A CULTURE *of* CARING

A Suicide Prevention Guide for Schools (K-12)



THEODORA SCHIRO

By Theodora Schiro, author of *A Culture of Caring: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Schools (K-12)*

RESOURCES

RESOURCES

This subject is a sensitive one. If it causes you discomfort or you are in crisis, help is available.

Call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 800-273-8255, or click the link to chat. <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Or text TALK to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

PLEASE NOTE:

Materials and links provided are for informational purposes only and are aligned with the webinar content. The webinar presenters do not promote any particular programs, materials, or organizations.

Part 1: Overview of youth suicide; statistics and scope of problem

These links provide current data on suicide statistics:

- <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>
- https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/pdf/leading_causes_of_death_by_age_group_2018-508.pdf

Part 2: Prevention, intervention, and postvention; successes and challenges

Upstream Suicide Prevention

Prevention starts in kindergarten. This link shows an example of a mental health lesson for young children.

- Gizmo, the therapy dog, in [Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health](#) helps elementary school staff effectively teach children about mental health, life skills development, and social connectedness.

Please see link regarding ordering copies of Gizmo's book. <https://www.preventsuicidect.org/materials/>

This is an example of a game used to develop behavior management strategies for young children.

- [Good Behavior Game](#)

Childhood Trauma

ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences and can be used to understand and address suicidal behavior in children and adults. The links below provide information, tools, and training.

- CDC: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) <https://www.nctsn.org>
- Trauma-Informed Schools <http://traumaawareschools.org>
- Aces Aware Free Screening Tools <https://www.acesaware.org/screen/screening-tools/>
- Beyond Consequences Institute <https://www.beyondconsequences.com/>

Social Emotional Support

Social Emotional Learning is critical to student success. These links are examples of programs used successfully in schools.

- [Social Emotional Support.pdf \(judsonisd.org\)](#)
- [K-8 SEL Curriculum: Second Step](#)
- [9-12 SEL Program - DBT](#)

Family Engagement

Getting parents involved in schools can be challenging but is an important part of suicide prevention. The following links provide examples of how to evaluate and increase family engagement.

- [Flamboyant Classroom Family Engagement Rubric](#)
- [Academic Partnering Companion Guide for School Leaders - Flamboyant Foundation](#)
- [Flamboyant Foundation](#)

Boston Public Schools

Boston Public Schools has a strong community-based suicide prevention program. It can be used as a model for other districts.

- [BPS Department of Behavioral Health Services](#)
- [Boston Children's Hospital Neighborhood Partnerships | Training and Access Project \(TAP\)](#)
- [A Supportive School for Every Student: How Massachusetts Districts Are Bringing Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Health Supports to Schools and Classrooms](#)

American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association provides guidance on the best practices for school counselors.

- [School Counselor Roles and Ratios](#)
- [ASCA National Model; A Framework for School Counseling Programs](#)

The National Association of School Psychologists provides guidance on the best practices for school psychologists.

- [NASP Practice Model](#)

Part 3: How school culture influences suicide prevention

Freedom High School

Freedom High School has an effective suicide prevention program and provides a model other schools can use. They have implemented Sources of Strength, a suicide prevention program that uses peer leaders to enhance protective factors.

- Chantilly, VA: [Freedom High](#)
- Sources of Strength: <https://sourcesofstrength.org/>

Promoting Well-Being

This link provides an example of how to create a culture of caring.

- <https://www.educationcorner.com/how-create-community-culture-school.html>

Connectedness

The CDC reports that adolescent connectedness is an important protective factor in suicide prevention.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/youth-connectedness-important-protective-factor-for-health-well-being.htm>

Myths About Suicide

Myths about suicide can interfere with prevention efforts. School administrators should educate themselves on the facts that disprove those myths.

- https://www.who.int/mental_health/suicide-prevention/myths.pdf

Part 4: How to develop and implement comprehensive prevention policies and plans

Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention

The AFSP Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention was developed in collaboration with the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Trevor Project. The program is research based and easily adaptable for middle and high schools. It provides a foundation any school or district can use to create their own policies.

- [AFSP Model School Policy on Suicide Prevention](#)

Fairfax County Public Schools

Fairfax County Public Schools has an engaging student-focused website. It is an example other schools and districts can use to create their own student wellness sites.

- <https://www.fcps.edu/student-wellness-tips>
- <https://www.fcps.edu/blog/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-parents-and-educators>
- <https://www.fcps.edu/blog/what-happens-when-you-call-or-text-prs-crisislink>

If your school has lost someone to suicide

This toolkit provides step-by-step guidance on how to handle the aftermath of a student suicide.

- [After a Suicide - A Toolkit for Schools](#)

Safe Reporting Guidelines

Refer the media to <https://reportingonsuicide.org/> for safe reporting recommendations.

Additional Resources

Websites

- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)
- [The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#)
- Be the one to help save a life: www.BeThe1To.com

Books

For the for the mental health professionals on your campus:

- *Suicide in Schools; A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention* by Terri A. Erbacher, Jonathan B. Singer, and Scott Poland

For the school leaders, counselors, and teachers on your campus:

- [A CULTURE OF CARING: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Schools \(K-12\)](#), written from a school principal's perspective to help teachers, counselors, and school leaders know how to get started with their suicide prevention programs and what to do for prevention, intervention, and postvention. It also includes a much more extensive list of resources along with commentary from experts in the field.

Video

This short video clip is about a young man who survived a suicide attempt. His message is that if one person had stopped him and told him they cared about him, it would have prevented him from jumping.

- [Kevin Hines - Golden Gate Bridge Story](#)

Safety Plan

A sample safety plan is included for use with students who have been screened with a risk assessment tool and are believed to be at risk for suicidal ideation.

Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention

A checklist is included for school leaders who already have a suicide prevention policy in place. It can be used for evaluating what you already have and what needs to be added.