

Fast Facts: Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention

Although suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 10-19 in the U.S., many school districts do not have comprehensive policies and procedures in place relating to youth suicide and its prevention. In a typical high school, it is estimated that three students will attempt suicide each year, while even more seriously consider attempting suicide or report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for weeks at a time. School district policies and procedures can help schools ensure that students in crisis are referred to supportive resources and that suicides within the school community are addressed appropriately. By having clear policies and procedures in place concerning suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, schools can act to reduce the risk of suicide and to prevent suicide contagion.

Contributing Groups

The model is a collaborative effort of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and The Trevor Project.

How to Use the Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention

This model will serve as a tool for school staff, school board members, advocates, parents, and students for the development and implementation of comprehensive school district policies on suicide prevention. Employing language from strong local policies throughout the country and the expertise of the contributing groups, the model policy:

- Is a comprehensive, yet modular document that school districts may use to draft new or amend their own district policies based on the unique needs of the district.
- Can complement existing state laws requiring suicide prevention training for school personnel or education for students.
- Is intended to be paired with other policies and programs that support the emotional and behavioral well-being of youth.

Suicide is very rare among elementary school youth, therefore the language and concepts covered by the model are most applicable to middle and high schools.

Model School District Policy Components

The model provides school districts with recommended language for school district policies that address preventing, assessing the risk of, intervening in, and responding to youth suicidal behavior. The model also contains commentary, best practices, and resources pertaining to youth suicide prevention.

Contact Information

If you are interested in adopting or amending a suicide prevention policy in your own school district, we can help! Please contact Alison Gill, Government Affairs Director at The Trevor Project (Alison.Gill@TheTrevorProject.org) or Nicole Gibson, Manager of State Advocacy and Grassroots Outreach at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (NGibson@afsp.org).