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Subject: Penn*Link Act 71 of 2014 Suicide Awareness and Prevention

To: ALL LEAS

From: Matthew S. Stem, Deputy Secretary

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Date: October 1, 2018

Re: Act 71 of 2014 - Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 - 24. Your school can help raise awareness and prevent youth suicide through the coordination of educational training and programming that includes students and all school personnel, including support staff.

Act 71 of 2014 requires school entities provide four hours of training in youth suicide awareness and prevention every five years for professional educators in school buildings servicing students in grades 6-12.

Under this law, school entities must incorporate "protocols administering youth suicide prevention education to staff and students" into their suicide awareness and prevention policy. However, schools are not precluded from providing training and education to all school personnel, including support staff (e.g., secretarial staff, custodians, food service, etc.).

Best Practices in Suicide Education and Awareness

Best practice around suicide prevention education generally recommends the following:

1. Staff have training about suicide prevention before engaging in student education.
2. Counseling and support staff be involved with the planning of suicide prevention education and they are available for any students who find themselves needing assistance.
3. A large assembly is NOT the best way to discuss suicide prevention, as it does not provide an opportunity to monitor students who may be very uncomfortable with the discussion of suicide.

4. It be clearly communicated to students that in the course of suicide prevention education if they are uncomfortable or find themselves needing to speak to someone, that there is a designated protocol for that to happen.

Resources for Student Suicide Education and Awareness

Prevent Suicide PA and the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant team have compiled information about available suicide prevention education programs for students, organized by cost, duration, and target population (i.e., whether the program is designed for all students or small groups/individual students):

Student Suicide Prevention Program Guide<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Youth-Resources-for-Suicide-Prevention_Final.pdf>

Student Suicide Prevention Program Spreadsheet<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Youth-Resources-for-Suicide-Prevention_Final.xlsx> (note: Click on different tabs to review programs organized by cost, duration, etc.)

Resources for Staff Education and Training

Prevent Suicide PA and the Garrett Lee Smith grant team have compiled information about suicide prevention trainings for educators, organized by cost, duration, and target grade levels:

Suicide Prevention Trainings for Educators: Sorted by Cost<<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Copy-of-Suicide-Prevention-Trainings-for-Teachers-School-Staff-By-Cost.pdf>>

Suicide Prevention Trainings for Educators: Sorted by Duration<<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Copy-of-Suicide-Prevention-Trainings-for-Teachers-School-Staff-Sorted-by-Training-Length-2.pdf>>

Suicide Prevention Trainings for Educators: Sorted by Grade Level<<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Copy-of-Suicide-Prevention-Trainings-for-Teachers-School-Staff-Sorted-by-Age.pdf>>

Brief Resources for Educators, Parents, and Community Members<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Parent-Resources_Final.pdf>

Prevent Suicide PA recently launched their Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center<<https://preventsuicidepalearning.com/>>, with a range of free online trainings for educators, including an 8-module course that fulfills the 4-hour Act 71 requirement and covers the PDE recommended topics for educator training.

School Policy and Procedures

Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, school entities were required to adopt an "age appropriate youth suicide awareness and prevention policy."

PDE has collaborated with Prevent Suicide PA, the Garrett Lee Smith Grant, and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) develop a model policy and administrative regulation documents for schools, in order to reflect current best practices in school-based suicide prevention.

The revised documents can be found on PDE's Act 71 of 2014 page:

Model Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy<<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Act%2071/Model%20Youth%20Suicide%20Awareness%20and%20Prevention%20Policy.pdf>>

Model Suicide Awareness and Prevention Administrative Regulation<<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Safe%20Schools/Act%2071/Model%20Suicide%20Awareness%20and%20Prevention%20Administrative%20Regulation.pdf>>

More Information

For additional information about suicide prevention efforts in Pennsylvania, visit Prevent Suicide PA's website<<https://www.preventsuicidepa.org/>>.

If you have any questions relating to this Penn*Link or Pennsylvania's school suicide prevention and awareness mandates, please contact Carol Kuntz, Director for the Office for Safe Schools at (717)783-6469.

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