

Suicide Prevention: Readiness to Prevent Student Suicide

Summary

Student support personnel (i.e., school psychologists, school counselors, and school nurses) are charged with wide-ranging roles as they serve children with a variety of academic, socio-emotional, and behavioral needs. Despite the tireless efforts of training programs to prepare student support personnel for their varied roles in the schools, it is difficult to keep the pace. Having so many different jobs to do can be referred to as role saturation. With demands for proficient assessment practices, understanding of program evaluation, consultation, and intervention planning of other kinds, sometimes the nuances of social-emotional and mental health go under-represented in training. In addition to role saturation, student support personnel also experience role confusion. It is not uncommon for personnel to be confused about the degree to which they are expected to participate in the prevention, identification, and intervention with students who are at risk for suicide and self-harm. For example, sometimes school psychologists are regularly consulted on these matters and included in student assistant programs or building crisis teams and thus have found a way to be active in serving the needs of students at risk. In other schools, school counselors, school nurses, and other personnel are included more actively in such processes, and therefore school psychologists serve a more traditional role of assessment and special education.

Planning for Implementation

Collaboration Strategies

- Be sure that everyone in your school (including office staff, janitorial staff, and volunteers) are all aware of crisis and suicide prevention strategies including who to ask for help, how to help students, and what to do when suicidal ideation is suspected.
- Have regular check-ins with teachers to discuss questions they have, concerns they have about students, or to clarify information.
- Have ongoing consultation with professionals to discuss ways to mitigate risk.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- Continue to examine your own level of efficacy regarding handling threats or warning signs related to suicide and NSSI.
- Engage in professional development, role play, and consultation with colleagues to assuage concerns about readiness.

Implementation Strategies

- School-wide training regarding signs of suicide and how to intervene with students at risk
- Ongoing coaching and consultation for teachers and other staff regarding how to help students who they believe may be at risk

Additional Reading

- Curtin, S. C., & Heron, M. (2019). Death Rates Due to Suicide and Homicide Among Persons Aged 10-24: United States, 2000-2017. NCHS Data Brief, 352, 1–8.
- Erbacher, T. A., Singer, J. B., & Poland, S. (2015). School-based practice in action. Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention, and postvention. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Implementation

Below is a list of all of the suicide prevention trainings that are available as part of this series. Consider your personal level of readiness as well as the readiness of your school to respond to each of the topics below. Indicate whether you feel each topic is a low, medium, or high priority for improvement for you and/or your school. Record the date that each of the trainings is complete. Please note that while the trainings can be completed in any order, there are recommended prerequisites for some of the trainings. Click on the titles listed in the "Topic" column to access the trainings.

* = Training contains recommended prerequisites. For more information, visit <https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/modules/>

Priority	Topic <i>(Click on the title access the training)</i>	Date Complete
	Readiness to Prevent Student Suicide (this training)	
	Personal Beliefs Related to Suicide	
	Crisis Management Processes	
	Readiness to Respond to a Completed Student Suicide	
	Legal Issues Related to Student Suicide for Schools	
	Ethical Issues for School Mental Health Personnel	
	Best Practices to Promote a Safe School Climate	
	Programs to Improve School Climate	
	Programs to Prevent Student Suicide	
	Risk Factors of Student Suicide	
	*Warning Signs and Stressful Precipitating Events of Student Suicide	
	*Suicide Risk Assessment Best Practices	
	*Reflective Listening in Times of Crisis	
	Student Confidentiality and Parental Rights.	
	*Protocol for Handling Suspected Suicide Risk	
	*Brief Suicidal Risk Screening Tools	
	*Full Suicidal Risk Screening Tool	
	*Suicidal Risk Screening Outcomes	
	*Suicide Screening Process Documentation	
	Interventions by Suicide Risk Screening Outcomes	
	*Parent Notification Following a Suicide Risk Assessment	
	*Transfer of Responsibilities for a Student	
	*Suicidal Ideation and Mandated Reporting	
	*Safety Plans to Prevent Student Suicide	
	*Programs and Counseling Treatments for At-Risk Students	
	*Outside Referral for Student Mental Health Services	
	*Re-entry and Management Following Student Absence	
	*Continued Monitoring of Student Suicide Risk	
	Documentation of Suicide Prevention Efforts	
	*Crisis Team Response to a Completed Suicide	
	Student Grief Processes	
	*Psychological First Aid	
	*Suicide Contagion and Suicide on School Property	
	*Universal Supports After a Student Suicide (Tier I Response)	
	*Students that Require Some Additional Support After a Student Suicide (Tier II Response)	
	*Students that Require Extensive Support After a Student Suicide (Tier III Response)	
	Memorials, Anniversaries, and the New Normal	
	Signs and Symptoms of Burnout	
	*Contributing Factors to Burnout	
	Responding to Feelings of Burnout	
	Self-Care	
	Maintaining Wellness	

