

# School Readiness Workbook

The following pages offer a framework, checklists, and resources that school leaders and/or school implementation teams can use to:

- 1 Assess their current suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention readiness
- 2 Obtain professional development and training for staff
- 3 Develop suicide intervention and postvention procedures
- 4 Produce a plan to implement suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention initiatives.
- 5 Track the effectiveness of their efforts.



Office of  
Mental Health



# 1 Procedures when a student is at risk for suicide (Student Support Services)

**Considerations** - Student support staff, health staff, administrators, school-based mental Health professionals, and safety staff may all be called on to intervene when a student is going through a difficult life situation such as serious disciplinary action, assault or other victimization, mental health referral, school failure, stress or loss at home, or mental health referrals. These acute situational stresses may trigger emergence of suicide warning signs and warrant screening and intervention. Staff in these roles must be supported by a standardized procedure for intervention that includes brief screening for suicide risk, triage, referral, safety planning, parent notification, follow up, and return to school meeting. This standardized process should be accompanied by standardized documentation and should take a collaborative or team approach.

All should have training in a screening instrument, brief interventions like safety planning, and the school's standardized procedure and documentation template. Additionally, school based mental health staff may benefit from advanced training in suicide intervention skills and suicide risk assessment.

## Online resources

- [The Lighthouse Project](#)
- [Brief Online](#) training modules
- [MySafetyPlan App](#)

## Printable resources

- [CSSRS Screener with triage for schools](#)
- [Safety Planning Intervention Template](#)

## In person training

Helping Students at Risk for Suicide: Assessment, Intervention and Follow up – is a full day workshop designed for student support professionals, to equip them with the tools, knowledge, and skills to assist students having thoughts of suicide or engaging in suicidal behavior.

**Contact:** Pat Breux at [Pat.breux@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Pat.breux@omh.ny.gov) or your local chapter of the [http://www.nyasp.org/contact\\_us/](http://www.nyasp.org/contact_us/) for more information and to inquire about organizing this workshop near you.

**BENCHMARKS:** Score your school’s status from 1 to 5 with regards to the benchmarks below. Then note some initial steps toward best practice.

<b>BENCHMARKS – Procedures when a student is at risk</b> (Student Support Services Staff)	1	2	3	4	5
<p>A. Standardized written procedure for intervening with a student at risk for suicide. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>B. All health and mental health professionals have training in the use of a standardized, evidence-based suicide risk assessment or screening tool. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>C. Standardized documentation forms that student support staff have been trained in. A secure storage system exists for documentation that protects the privacy of students. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>D. Communications with community mental health providers and clear pathways to care have been optimized through agreements and dialog. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>E. Reentry meetings are in place when a student has left the building for community suicide risk assessment or for inpatient care. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>F. All mental health staff have training in Safety Planning Intervention and safety plan is documented. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>G. Debrief and support are provided to staff members that engaged in intervention. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					

*1 = not yet an item of focus, 2 = initial actions have been taken, 3 = several steps have been taken, 4 = nearly integrated into practice, 5 = comprehensively and sustainably integrated into practice*

# 2 Staff Education

## (All Faculty and Staff)

**Considerations** - all school employees need the training to be able to recognize common warning signs of suicide. Written guidelines that outline how staff are to refer a student who is exhibiting warning signs is essential.

For educators, it is also helpful to add information about how to handle suicide related topics in the classroom and discussion about factors that enhance student protection from suicide. Because school staff can also be at risk for suicide, or have colleagues or family members who exhibit warning signs, it is helpful to provide information about community resources and the national suicide prevention lifeline.

### Online resources

- Act on FACTS: Making Educators Partners in Teen Suicide Prevention – two-hour online training for educators. Access training [here](#). Trailer is [here](#).
- [Warning signs video](#)
- [Warm handoff video](#)

### Printable resources

- [SPCNY Teacher brochure with FACTS warning signs](#)
- [Talking Points for suicide prevention discussions in the classroom](#)
- [The role of high school teachers in preventing suicide](#)
- <https://rogersbh.org/Insight/teaching-compassion-resilience>
- <https://wisewisconsin.org/blog/the-safe-person-decal/>

### In person training

Suicide Safety for Teachers and staff is a brief training designed to meet the basic suicide prevention awareness needs of school faculty and staff. Delivered by certified local trainers, this 90-minute offering reviews basic information about suicide and prevention, including the critical but limited role of teachers in recognizing warning signs and making a warm handoff.

**Contact** [SPC-NY](#) to region leaders who can assist with identifying a certified trainer in your area.

**BENCHMARKS:** Score your school’s status from 1 to 5 with regards to the benchmarks below. Then note some initial steps toward best practice.

<b>BENCHMARKS – Staff Education</b> (All faculty and staff)	1	2	3	4	5
H. Written referral procedures, applicable to all school staff and school related functions are in place. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
I. Basic suicide prevention awareness training is provided to all school staff. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
J. Training provided to teachers includes how to manage suicide related topics in the classroom and student protective factors. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
K. Staff have a poster or handout to refer to with common youth suicide warning signs. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
L. Staff are informed about community resources and have the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline accessible. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
M. Refresher on warning signs and referral procedures is provided annually. <b>Planning notes:</b>					

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# 3 Student Resilience and Education

## (Students)

**Considerations** - There are many things to consider when developing or using a suicide prevention awareness curriculum with students. Certainly, educating students about warning signs and how to access help has benefits. Suicide is an increasingly popular topic in teen and young adult literature and entertainment as well. There are some evidence-based and best practice curricula available, but some important questions arise. What does the evaluation of the curriculum say that it does? And under what circumstances? Another important question to ask – Is it possible to do harm?

Research has shown that how we educate students about suicide is important. Dramatic presentations, testimonials, and prevalence statistics are of concerns. It is recommended that suicide prevention information be developmentally appropriate, and focused on positive coping and help-seeking rather than tragic stories. This information is better received when it is integrated than when it is stand alone. Auditorium presentation are to be offered with caution. Concern about this issue has led to the development of national safety guideline for effective messaging for suicide prevention. An example of an evidence-based program that meets these criteria is [Sources of Strength](#).

### Online resources

- <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/resilience-activities-worksheets/#schools>
- <https://sourcesofstrength.org/peer-leaders/>
- <http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/schoolwide-classroommgmt/good-behavior-game>
- <http://www.dbtinschools.com>
- <https://wisewisconsin.org/honest-open-proud/>
- <https://www.teachthought.com/life/preventing-youth-suicide-through-lessons-of-hope/>
- [School Climate survey and resources](#)
- [NYSED SEL Guidelines](#)
- [NYSED MH Education in Schools standards and resources](#)
- [SPTSUSA.org/Teens – Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide](#)
- [The Trevor Project – Telephone, text and chat support and crisis services for LGBTQ youth.](#)

### Printable resources

- [What every student should know brochure](#)
- [School Connectedness](#)
- [Student Presentations TALKING POINTS](#)

**BENCHMARKS:** Score your school's status from 1 to 5 with regards to the benchmarks below. Then note some initial steps toward best practice.

<b>BENCHMARKS – Student Education</b>	1	2	3	4	5
N. Measures in place for ongoing evaluation and improvement of school climate. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
O. Educators integrate Social, Emotional Learning principles into classroom management and curriculum. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
P. Restorative Practices, PBIS, or related model in place to address behavior and discipline. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
Q. Effective and ongoing bully prevention programming, policies, and training. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
R. Health and safety curriculum addresses mental wellness, coping with stress and distress, recognizing signs of mental distress and warning signs of suicide (high school). <b>Planning notes:</b>					
S. Effective substance use awareness and prevention education are provided. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
T. All students can identify trusted adults. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
U. Other <b>Planning notes:</b>					

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# 4 Working with Parents

**Considerations** - Parents are often challenged by the news that their child may be at risk for suicide. While some parents readily embrace this challenge, and can access community mental health resources, other parents can find the prospect of a diagnostic label, psychiatric hospitalization, or even mental health evaluation to be overwhelming, inaccessible, and intimidating. Schools that take advantage of opportunities to normalize mental health care, and educate parents about warning signs and community resources, prepare parents to meet their child's future needs should the challenge arise.

## **Online resources**

- [Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide Parent page](#)
- [Brief awareness video – warning signs](#)

## **Printable resources**

- [SPCNY Parent brochure with FACTS warning signs](#)

**BENCHMARKS:** Score your school’s status from 1 to 5 with regards to the benchmarks below. Then note some initial steps toward best practice.

<b>BENCHMARKS – Working with Parents</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>V. All parents are provided with education about mental health and wellness and early warning signs of mental health concerns. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>W. Parents are provided with education about trauma and the warning signs of trauma reactions and what to do about it. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>X. Community mental health resources are invited to participate in open house or other opportunities where parents may be at school. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>Y. Mental health information and resources are available on school website parent page. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>Z. Parents are educated about cyberbullying, traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, suicide prevention awareness. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					
<p>AA. When a child is at risk for suicide, parents are provided with information about mental health referral procedures, resistance is explored, and parents are invited to participate in collaborative decision-making. <b>Planning notes:</b></p>					

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# 5 Preparing for a Death by Suicide (School Crisis Teams)

**Considerations** - All schools in New York State are required to identify a school building level crisis team. In the aftermath of a death by suicide, this team would be charged with providing the initial response, engaging additional community supports, communicating with district leadership, engaging grief and mental health supports, and identifying an following up with those affected and with students at risk.

These activities may have to take place quickly, and with crisis team members who may be personally affected by the loss. It is crucial therefore, that pre-planning and team development are conducted at regular intervals. Regularly scheduled meetings and practicing with table top exercises is one way to prepare.

## **Online resources**

- [After a Suicide Toolkit for Schools](#)
- [When a Child's Friend Dies by Suicide](#)
- [Preparing a Child to Attend the Funeral of a Friend](#)
- [Memorial after Suicide at School](#)

## **In person training**

Lifelines Postvention: School Response to Suicide and Traumatic Death is a National Best Practice professional development for school administrators and crisis team leaders. This offering is available through the Suicide Prevention Center of New York. **Contact:** Pat Breux at [Pat.breux@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Pat.breux@omh.ny.gov) to inquire about organizing this workshop near you.

**BENCHMARKS:** Score your school’s status from 1 to 5 with regards to the benchmarks below. Then note some initial steps toward best practice.

<b>BENCHMARKS – Procedures for After a Death by Suicide (Crisis Team)</b>	1	2	3	4	5
BB. There is an identified building level crisis team, with an identified team leader. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
CC. Crisis team meets annually to review roles and responsibilities, participate in readiness assessment, and review crisis protocols and procedures. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
DD. District level crisis and safety leaders meet with building level teams annually. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
EE. Building level crisis team meets at least twice a year to practice response with table top exercise. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
FF. District has reviewed <i>After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools</i> , and/or <i>Lifelines Postvention: School Response Suicide and Traumatic Death</i> , both National Best Practices, to assess training needs or updates to procedures and policies. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
GG. There is a plan for assessing level of response required and accessing district level or community level supports if need arises. <b>Planning notes:</b>					
HH. Supportive and honest debrief, care of caregivers, and ongoing support of those affected and those at risk are integrated into crisis procedures. <b>Planning notes:</b>					

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