

Suicide Prevention:

Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

Best Practices for Implementing Your
Suicide Prevention Plan

September and October 2017



Estelle Watts, DNP, RN, NCSN

Health Science Specialist
Career and Technical Education

ewatts@mdek12.org

601-359-3708

VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community

1. All Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas
2. Every Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career
3. Every Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program
4. Every School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders
5. Every Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes
6. Every School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

Statistics

- Suicide 10th leading cause of death in US
- Suicide is 3rd leading cause of death in MS
- More young people die by suicide than by other causes combined
- With every suicide there are 25 attempts
- 4 of 5 people who die of suicide are male.
- 3 of 4 people who attempt suicide are female
- There are 121 suicides per day in the US



56 adolescents in Mississippi died by suicide in 2014



That is enough
children to fill
an entire school bus.

Myth or Fact

People who talk about suicide won't really do it.

Fact: Almost everyone who attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Don't ignore even indirect references to death or suicide. Statements like "You'll be sorry when I'm gone," "I can't see any way out," — no matter how casually or jokingly said, may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy.

- **Fact:** Most suicidal people are not psychotic or insane. They must be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing, but extreme distress and emotional pain are not necessarily signs of mental illness



Myth or Fact

If a person is determined to kill him/herself, nothing is going to stop them.

- **Fact:** Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

People who die by suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help.

- **Fact:** Studies of suicide victims have shown that more than half had sought medical help in the six months prior to their deaths.

Talking about suicide may give someone the idea.

- **Fact:** You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true—bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do



History of Suicide Prevention in MS

- Legislature passed in 2009
- Required that teachers and principals receive suicide prevention training
- DMH selected 4 evidence-based curriculums:
 - Yellow Ribbon, Be a Link, Signs of Suicide (SOS), Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Three regional trainings
 - Counselors or school nurses
 - Implementation left up to the districts

2017 Legislature: House Bill 263



- MS Department of Education shall require all school districts to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention.
- Requires all school districts employees be trained in suicide prevention curriculum in the 2017-18 school year.
 1. Including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians, nurses, teachers, administrators.
 2. After 2017-18 school year, only new employees trained.
 3. Department of Mental Health responsible for selecting the curriculum.

Model Policy-Prevention



- A collaborative model policy was selected
 - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
 - American School Counselor Association
 - National Association of School Psychologists
 - The Trevor Project
- A MS policy template was developed in consultation with
 - MS School Board Association
 - School and Community Stakeholders
 - School-employed mental health professionals
 - Suicide prevention experts
- Procedural Template Developed

Model Policy: Prevention (requirements)



- Each school designates a district suicide prevention coordinator (selected by Superintendent)
- Districts must plan and implement a policy
 1. Schools may designate a coordinator as a point of contact for school specific issues.
 2. Additional professional development recommended annually as a refresher.
- District Implementation guide developed

Model Policy: Intervention



- If a student is identified as potentially suicidal

School employed mental health focused professional will see student on the same day. (mental health professional, counselor, school nurse, suicide prevention coordinator)

Continually supervise student at risk to insure safety.

Contact students parents and refer student to mental health services.

Model Policy: Postvention



- Engage in activities with reduce risk and promote healing after a suicide death.

Verify the death-don't "Label", wait for the cause to be known

Assess the situation-meet to prepare postvention response

Share information-with staff and students, include only basic facts

Avoid suicide contagion-consider possibility of other high risk students.

Initiate support services-mental health assessment identifying needed level of support

Memorial plans-All deaths should be treated the same way

External communication-identify a sole media spokesperson

Curriculum Selection



Focus Group formed

- MDE staff
- Local teachers
- Nurses-a school nurse and a health science teacher
- School district administrator
- Mental health professional
- DMH Staff
- Mother & Friend of persons who died by suicide

Curriculum Selection



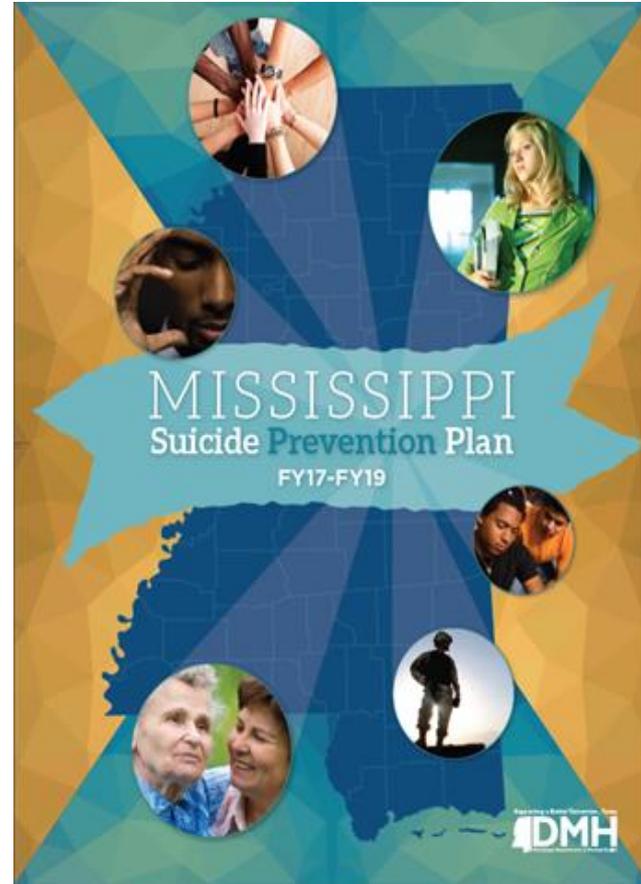
Based on focus groups recommendations, 2 online professional development series were selected

- Address key components of the law
- Regularly updated to reflect new data
- No cost to school districts
- No travel involved
- Flexible implementation
- Certificates generated once completed

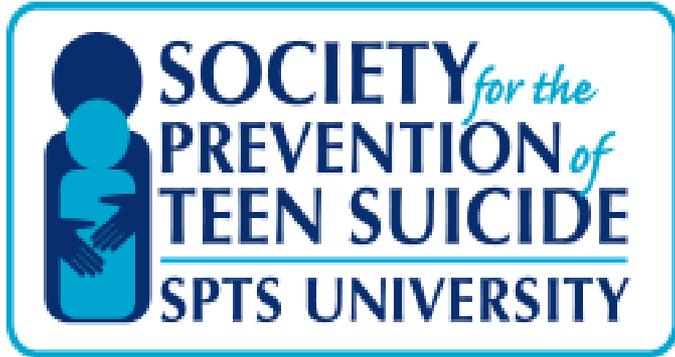
Suicide Prevention Plan

Released in September 2016.

Includes Objective 1.6 – *Review and assess legislation mandating suicide prevention for school professionals.* (2009 legislation)



Curriculum



Certified Staff

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Counselors
- School Nurses



Classified Staff

- Bus drivers
- Custodians
- Cafeteria Personnel
- School Resource Officers

Jason Foundation-classified staff

- <http://jasonfoundation.com/>
- The Coordinator should register prior to the training
 1. Go to “Get Involved”
 2. Choose Educator, Youth Worker, Coach
 3. Choose Professional Development Series
 4. Choose Mississippi under “State” drop down menu
 5. Under My Courses click Two-Hour Courses
 6. Choose Module 5—Youth Suicide: “A Silent Epidemic”
 7. Click View Course- there are Five Chapters with Review

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide-certified staff

- <http://www.sptsusa.org/>
 - Coordinator should register prior to training
 - Choose Courses the 2017-18 National Version—Making Educators Partners In Youth Suicide Prevention: Act on Facts
1. Click the 2017-18 National Version—Making Educators Partners In Youth Suicide Prevention: Act on Facts
 2. Go to the Educators tab
 3. Choose online training
 4. Left side of page choose Login or Create New Account

District Implementation Plan

- Consider dissemination of policy for parent and community access.
- All District level training should include classified and certified staff even though they may not have daily student contact.
- All School level training should include classified and certified staff assigned to a specific school building within the district and have daily contact with students. This group is made up of mostly teachers and specific support staff.

District Implementation plan

- It is recommended the classified staff complete The Jason Foundation Curriculum.
- It is recommended the certified staff complete the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide curriculum.
- It is up to the district/school to determine how the training will reach all groups of employees.
- Districts must select a Suicide Prevention Coordinator to communicate and report to MDE.
- Districts may select a school specific coordinator to communicate with the District Coordinator.

Monitoring

- Each district will report initial training by January 15, 2018
- Each district will provide signed verification of training, how the training was delivered, and the curriculum used
- MDE includes verification of yearly training on the yearly monitoring tools. Districts will maintain sign-in, agenda, and certificate verification for school staff. Available on request.
- All resources will be posted on the MDE and DMH websites for easy access

Resources

- HB263training@mdek12.org (dedicated e-mail address)
- <http://www.mdek12.org/> (Offices)

Secondary Education
Elementary Education and Reading
Safe and Orderly Schools
Healthy Schools

Resources

- The Legislation—House Bill 263 (MS Code 37-11-67)
- District Implementation Plan
- Sample Suicide Prevention Policy
- Training Power Point
- Certified Staff Training Link
- Classified Staff Training Link
- District training Sign Off (reporting) document
- Procedure Template

Training will be provided for the identified individuals in each district, 3 trainings have been scheduled.

- September 29—Starkville School District
- October 5—FFA Center Raymond MS
- October 27—MS Gulf Coast Community College



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright *future* for every child

Estelle Watts, DNP, RN, NCSN

Health Science Specialist
Acting School Nurse Consultant

ewatts@mdek12.org

601-359-3708

