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September 20, 2016

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Leads
Renaissance School Project Leads
Administrators of Nonpublic Schools
Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

FROM: Nancy Curry, Director
Office of Student Support Services

SUBJECT: Suicide Prevention Awareness and Education

Each new school year brings excitement and opportunities for academic as well as social and emotional growth. It may also bring personal challenges and hardship for some members of the school community that, left unnoticed, could have devastating effects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranks suicide as the third leading cause of death for New Jersey youth ages 10 to 24. Between 2012 and 2014, there were 265 confirmed suicides by New Jersey youth ages 10 to 24, with male youth continuing to complete suicide at a higher rate (7.9) than female youth (2.2).¹

To help eliminate unnecessary tragedy, school administrators and staff are encouraged to promote suicide prevention awareness and education, and help students and parents know the warning signs and how to appropriately respond when there is a concern that someone may hurt him/herself.

As a reminder, each public school teaching staff member must complete a minimum of two hours of instruction in suicide prevention. This instruction is to be provided by a licensed health care professional with training and experience in mental health issues, and must also include information on the relationship between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-112).

The following resources may be helpful in developing materials and activities, communicating with parents and delivering trainings:

- U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) free toolkit entitled *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*
- [Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide \(SPTS\)](#)
- [Traumatic Loss Coalition for Youth \(TLC\)](#) at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care

¹ New Jersey Department of Children and Families, *2015 New Jersey Youth Suicide Report* (http://www.nj.gov/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/dcfreportsnewsletters/FY15_YouthSuicideReport.pdf).

Additionally, the New Jersey Hopeline at (855) 654-6735 and the National Suicide Prevention Helpline at (800) 273-TALK (8255) are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week if someone is considering suicide.

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