



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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September 2, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

FROM: Susan Martz, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services and Career Readiness

SUBJECT: National Suicide Prevention Week and Suicide Prevention Professional Development

In an effort to raise awareness of suicide prevention, **September 8-14, 2014** has been designated as National Suicide Prevention Week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rank suicide as the third leading cause of death for New Jersey youth ages 10 to 24. Between 2010 and 2012, there were 233 confirmed suicides by New Jersey youth ages 10 to 24 and 2,248 youth were hospitalized for attempted suicide and/or self-inflicted injuries.¹

Results of the 2013 New Jersey Youth Health Survey indicate that during the past year, 29% of high school students felt sad or hopeless for two weeks straight; 18% hurt themselves on purpose by cutting or burning without wanting to die; 14% considered suicide; 12% made a suicide plan; and 10% attempted suicide at least one time.²

In order to support high schools in implementing strategies to prevent suicide and promote healthy behaviors and foster a positive learning environment, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*. The toolkit includes: screening tools, research-based guidelines, parent education materials, and resources for students and staff. The **free** toolkit may be downloaded at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA12-4669>.

New Jersey recognized the need to address youth suicide, and became the first state in the country to require all educators to complete suicide prevention instruction as part of their professional development. Pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-112*, 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 shall also include information on the relationship between the risk of suicide and incidents of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Should you have questions about these professional development requirements, please email teachpd@doe.state.nj.us.

Please share this memorandum with your staff and consider recognizing National Suicide Prevention Week in your district. As a reminder, *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11.1(b)* requires district boards of education to adopt policies and procedures for school district employees, volunteers, or interns to report to the Department of Children and

¹ New Jersey Department of Children and Families, *2013 Youth Suicide Report: Data Overview and Recommendations on Youth Suicide in New Jersey* (<http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/news/reportsnewsletters/dcfreportsnewsletters/Adolescent%20Suicide%20Report%202013.pdf>).

² New Jersey Department of Education, *2013 Student Health Survey* (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/yrbs/2013/full.pdf>).

Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency when they have reasonable cause to believe that a student has attempted or contemplated suicide.

As always, the National Suicide Prevention Helpline at 1-800-273-TALK(8255) and the New Jersey Hopeline at 1-855-654-6735 are available if you or someone you know is considering suicide.

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