

# Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

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MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

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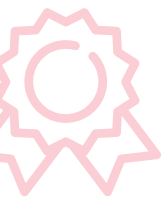
## VISION

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

**EVERY** School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



**EVERY** Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



**EVERY** School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

6



- 49,316 suicide deaths in the U.S. in 2023 (14.7 per 100,000)
- Firearms involved in over 55% of cases
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 10–24 in Mississippi
- 480 suicide deaths in MS in 2021, including 65 under age 25
- Youth suicide rate up 62% nationally since 2007

# Know the Facts

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**Myth:** Talking about suicide or asking someone if they feel suicidal will encourage suicidal attempts

**Fact:** Talking about suicide with a person gives them an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings about something they may have been keeping secret

**Myth:** Young people who talk about suicide never attempt or die by suicide

**Fact:** Most talking about suicide can be a plea for help and it can be a late sign in the progression towards a suicide attempt

**Myth:** If a person attempts suicide and survives, they will never make a further attempt

**Fact:** A suicide attempt is regarded as an indicator of further attempts

**Myth:** Most young people thinking about suicide never seek or ask for help with their problems

**Fact:** Evidence shows that they often tell their school peers of their thoughts and plan

Adolescents are more likely to “ask” for help through non-verbal gestures than to express their situation verbally to others

# History of Suicide Prevention in MS

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## 2009

- Required that teachers and principals receive suicide prevention training
- MDMH selected 4 evidence based curriculums

## 2017- (HB 263)

- MDE shall require all school districts to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention and bullying.
- Required all school districts employees be trained in suicide prevention curriculum in the 2017-2018 school year

## 2019- (HB 1283)

- Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, MDE shall require school districts to conduct, every (2) years, refresher training on mental health and suicide prevention to all school employees and personnel
- School districts shall report training to MDE

# Model Policy

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## A Collaborative Model Policy Was Selected

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- American School Counselor Association
- National Association on 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

## Sample Policy [Website](#)



- The superintendent appoints a suicide prevention coordinator for the district
- District must plan and implement a suicide prevention policy
- Each year, the district provides professional development on suicide policy and procedures to all staff (Best Practice)
- Staff at all levels are trained on mental health and suicide prevention
- Policy distributed annually (e.g., student and teacher handbook and school website)

If a student is identified as potentially suicidal:

- School mental health professional will see student on the same day. (Mental health professional: Licensed Professional Counselor, Social Worker, Certified Mental Health Therapist, School Counselor, School Nurse)
  - Continually supervise at-risk student to ensure safety
- Contact student's parents and refer student to mental health services
- Utilize re-entry procedures

- Develop and Implement a Crisis Response Plan

### Action Plan Steps:

1. Get the Facts
2. Assess the Situation
3. Share Information
4. Avoid Suicide Contagion
5. Initiate Support Services
6. Memorial Plans
7. Postvention as Prevention

# Trainings

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## Approved Mental Health & Suicide Trainings:

- The Alliance Project
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- The Jason Foundation, Inc. (JFI) Staff Development Training Modules
- Making Educators Partners in Youth Suicide Prevention: Act on Facts – National Version
- Shatter the Silence: Suicide – The Secret You Shouldn't Keep • Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Classroom WISE: Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators



## Approved Mental Health & Suicide Trainings:

- Vector Solutions (\$) (Web-based Training)

**Note:** To be in compliance with HB1283, all other trainings must be approved



# District Guidance

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Prevention, Intervention, Postvention

- **All district and school** level employees and personnel shall be trained on mental health and suicide prevention (e.g., cafeteria workers, custodians, teachers, assistant teachers, administrators, etc.)
- It is up to the district/school to determine how the training will reach all groups of employees
- Districts may select a school-specific coordinator to communicate with the District Coordinator
- Districts must select a Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Coordinator to communicate and report to MDE

# Requirements



Process Standard 17.9  
(Public Schools): Mental  
Health and Suicide  
Prevention Training.

**Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-3-  
83 (9), 37- 3-101, and 37-3-  
103.**

Process Standard 14.9  
(Non-Public Schools):  
Mental Health and Suicide  
Prevention Training.

**Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-3-  
83 (9), 37- 3-101, and 37-3-  
103.**

- Districts must provide a signed Assurance Form verifying the training was conducted, how it was conducted, and what curriculum was used.
- The Assurance Form must be submitted by **October 31st** by each district
- Trainings will be verified yearly by MDE
- Districts will maintain sign-in sheets, agendas, and certificate verifications for school staff

- For compliance with HB1283, trainings other than those recommended by the MDMH must be submitted to MDE for approval.
  - Online curriculum name and information
  - Face-to-Face Training
  - Agenda
  - Learning Objectives
  - Power Point
  - Credentials of the Presenter
- The district's coordinator will send the Assurance Form via email to [suicidementalhealth@mdek12.org](mailto:suicidementalhealth@mdek12.org)



# Best Practices

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- Train and review the district's suicide and bullying prevention policy **yearly** with **ALL** staff
- Train short-term employees (substitutes, interns, etc.) on district suicide and bullying prevention policies
- Provide mental health and suicide prevention training to **ALL** staff **yearly**
- Train new staff within 90 days of hire
- Select different training curriculums yearly or bi-yearly from the recommended training list
- Maintain fidelity to trainings

- A system in place to store training documents for monitoring
- Tier I School Counseling Program – Student Awareness or Psychoeducation on Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Bullying Prevention
  - Classroom Instruction
  - Age-appropriate evidence-based curriculum
  - Referral process

# Resources and References

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- [MDE Mental Health Website](#)
- [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Guidebook](#)
- [Sample Suicide Prevention Policy](#)
- [Sample Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [The Assurance Form](#)
- [Mississippi Department of Mental Health](#)

*This presentation was originally developed by Dr. Chancey Fort, P-LPC, SB-RPT. Revised in August 2025 by Jana' Slay, Ed.S., NCC, NCSC, Office of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of K-12 Academic Counseling Programs*



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