



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

# Annual Model Notice For Youth Suicide Prevention

2025 - 2026

## Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

Visit [DPI's website](#) to access online training modules, suicide prevention requirements in state law, curriculum and teaching materials, and peer-to-peer grant opportunities. Additional resources include suggestions for school board policy and memorials, screening resources, and information and toolkits on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

### Resources for emergency situations

988

Dial for immediate assistance in a suicide or mental health crisis.

HOPELINE

Text "HOPELINE" to 741741

<https://www.centerforsuicideawareness.org/hopeline>.

TREVOR PROJECT

[thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)

Text 678-678 or Call 1-866-488-7396

### Resources for non-emergency situations:

Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools (WISH) Training Center

[www.wishschools.org](http://www.wishschools.org)

Prevent Suicide Wisconsin

[www.preventsuicidewi.org](http://www.preventsuicidewi.org)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org/>

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All staff play a role in

suicide prevention.

Gatekeeper training helps

all staff with recognizing

the signs and symptoms of

suicidal thoughts and

behavior and taking

appropriate steps to keep a

student safe.

## Know the Signs

Suicide doesn't usually happen out of the blue— most often, there are signs or symptoms for others to see or hear. Get the **FACTs** and know the signs of suicidal thinking in your students, friends, and family members (*see FACTs chart on right*).

## Suicide is a Complex Problem

Multiple factors are involved when someone dies by suicide. Oversimplifying the reasons someone takes their own life is not helpful. For instance, saying bullying “caused” someone to end their life is not accurate. Not all bullying victims kill themselves. Research suggests many factors contribute to suicide. These include biological factors, social determinants of health, precipitating factors, and activating events. Examples of biological factors and social determinants of health include mental illness, losing a family member to suicide, neighborhood violence, or food security. Precipitating factors include poor grades, attending an unsafe school, victimization, or family rejection. Crisis or activating events include experiencing a major loss, humiliation or bullying, and having access to lethal means. Suicide is a complex problem that is often misunderstood when oversimplified. ([American Foundation for Suicide](#))

**Identifying the factors of disproportionate risk for youth suicide is vital to prevention.**

Youth identifying as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual (LGB): for the past several years, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results have shown almost half of LGB youth seriously considered suicide and are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their non-LGB peers.

Female youth: YRBS data shows female students were twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to male students.

**Lethal means safety can save lives.**

(see [Lethal Means Safety](#) and [Be Smart for Kids](#))

Encouraging secure storage of all lethal means is a critical prevention strategy, and reducing access provides the most significant reduction in youth suicide rates. Most often, youth who attempt suicide use a gun or drugs kept in the home. Do not allow youth to have unsupervised access to firearms and dangerous medications.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION SIGNS or SYMPTOMS (FACTs)

### FEELINGS

- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Feeling trapped – like there's no way out
- Having no sense of purpose in life

### ACTIONS

- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Withdrawing from friends, family, society, and typical activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Giving away prized possessions

### CHANGES

- Decline in quality of schoolwork
- Dramatic mood changes
- Anxiety, agitation, change of eating/sleeping habits

### THREATS

- Threatening/talking about hurting self

*From American Association of Suicidology*



(continued on page 3)

## Suicide is a Complex Problem (cont'd)

### What can you do if you are concerned about a student?

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem; but for kids, their problems can seem endless. If we can get them through the crisis, there is a 90 percent chance that they will never attempt suicide. School staff, peers, and family members are well-positioned to observe individual behaviors and respond using the IACTT model if they suspect that a student may be considering self-harm. IACTT stands for **Identify, Ask, Communicate, Take action, and Take care.**

**Identify** the signs and symptoms of someone who is struggling with their mental health. Reaching out to others with an empathetic *“Thank you for sharing with me. It sounds really hard”* can be the first step in helping them through their crisis.

**Ask** questions to learn more about what is going on and ask the person directly if they are thinking about suicide. Use open questions (e.g., “Tell me what’s going on.”) to gather information and context. Don’t be afraid to ask the hard question (e.g., “Have you had thoughts about suicide?”)

**Communicate** care and compassion for the student by taking the next step. (e.g., *“I am worried about you. I don’t want anything bad to happen to you or for you to be hurt.”*)

**Take action** and tell a member of your crisis team. (e.g., *“Let’s go talk with someone in the counseling office.”*)

**Take care of yourself.** You have helped and supported someone, now give yourself that same care. Seek support from your network.



Text HOPELINE  
to 741741



## Common Concerns

### What if I make a mistake? Can I be sued?

State Law, [Wis. Stat. Sec. 118.295 Suicide intervention: civil liability exemption](#) insulates all public and private school district employees and volunteers from civil liability for their acts and omissions when trying to intervene in a student’s possible suicide. Lawmakers found it so important that adults take action when a student is suicidal that they protected those adults from any civil liability for their intervention efforts.

**Does asking about suicide cause a student to attempt it?** No. This issue has been thoroughly studied. By asking a student about suicidal intent, you are offering to help them. Listen, empathize, and don’t be afraid to ask the question, “Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself?”



# Seeing Urgent Signs or Symptoms? Here's What to Know and Do

All children and adolescents can experience moodiness and will take time to ask life's big questions. As they grow, question, and struggle, it can be overwhelming. The best role for staff is to support students and use IACTT if signs or symptoms of suicide are observed, shared, or relayed.

Here are some ways to respond and what to avoid when you see warning signs:

### **Do this – Validate, *instead of this - Shame***

NOT: "You're not thinking of doing something stupid, are you?"

RATHER: "You seem to be struggling with something. How can I help?"

NOT: "Think of what it would do to your parents."

RATHER: "I really care and will be here to listen and help."

### **Do this – Act now, *instead of this - Delay***

When you see urgent signs or symptoms, *get help immediately*. Don't wait.

### **Do this – Support, *instead of this - Blame***

NOT: "If you wanted a better grade, you would've worked harder."

RATHER: "You seem disappointed in yourself. How can we do better?"

NOT: "Maybe changing your attitude would get you more friends."

RATHER: "Tell me what you look for in a friend. How can that be you?"

### **Do this – Persevere, *instead of this - Lose Hope***

*Suicide is NOT a destiny*. When people make it through the suicidal crisis and get help, they usually go on to live healthy, productive lives!

### **Do this – Collaborate, *instead of this - Do It Alone***

*Enlist* other pupil services staff, administration, and the family to help support the student!



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This publication is available from:

Division for Learning Support

Student Services/Prevention and Wellness

608-266-8960

[dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/youth-suicide-prevention](http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/youth-suicide-prevention)

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