

Suicide Prevention and Intervention Series FAQ

Suicide Assessment and Response for K-12 Populations, April 8, 2020

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Participant Question & Presenter Response

Q1 *What are some factors that contribute to higher suicide rates in Rocky Mountain States?*

A1 While it is impossible to know the exact cause of the increased rates of suicide in this region several things have been proposed as contributing risk factors. Some possible reasons for the higher rates of suicide may include:

- Decreased access to mental health resources
- Easier access to firearms due to higher rates of gun ownership
- Increased tendency to not access resources due to stigma
- Increased economic stressors related to stressful work and decreased employment options

For additional information related to suicide in rural areas please view the Rural Health Information Hub's (RHlhub) [Rural Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#)

Q2 *How can teachers, parents and adults support children during a time of social distancing?*

A2 One of the best things you can do for suicide prevention is to increase mental health education for the supports in children's lives. Educate parents, teachers, and caregivers how to identify mental health warning signs and steps to take if they are concerned about a child's safety. If you are concerned about a child's safety communicate this with their caregivers. Also, maintain regular contact, and perform suicide assessments if you feel it is necessary. Create safety plans with the student and the caregivers in their lives. Safety plans are intended to be a practical support for an individual in crisis and should be developed collaboratively with them and their caregivers.

MHTTC Developed Resources for Supporting Caregivers and Educators During COVID-19

- [Mental Health Resources for K-12 Educators during COVID-19](#)
- [Mental Health Resources for Parents and Caregivers during COVID-19](#)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) Safety Planning Guides:

- [Safety Planning Guide: A Quick Guide for Clinicians](#)
- [Patient Safety Plan Template](#)

National Crisis Support Hotlines:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or **1-888-628-9454** (Spanish)
- Crisis Text Line: **Text HOME to 741-741**
- Trevor Lifeline (For LGBTQ Youth): **1-866-488-7386**
- Trans Lifeline: **1-877-565-8860** or translifeline.org

National Association of School Psychologists Resources:

- [Suicidal Thinking and Threats: Helping Handout for Home](#)
- [Preventing Youth Suicide Tips for Parents and Educators Resources](#)

Q3 *If a school does not have a mental health emergency response plan already implemented what resources can help get things started?*

A3 The best place to start is to contact your district administrators to see if a plan or protocol does exist. If no plan exists discuss options for developing a collaborative district-wide plan. A key piece of mental health emergency response planning is ensuring you have adequately trained staff members identified ahead of an emergency who can effectively respond should a mental health emergency arise. Coordination with outside agencies such as mental health crisis teams or law enforcement is critical to ensure continuity of care. Possible resources to explore:

[SAMHSA Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)

[National Center for School Mental Health Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems](#)

[Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary, and Resources](#)

[A Framework for Safe and Successful School Environments](#)

Q4 *How can you best respond to adults, parents, and school personnel who are reluctant to use direct language about suicide with children and adolescents?*

A4 It is vital to ensure we are using developmentally appropriate language when having a conversation about suicide with children and adolescents. Being direct about suicide may look different at varying developmental levels. There is overwhelming evidence that talking directly about suicide is an effective prevention strategy and does not “plant the idea” of suicide in people’s minds.

[American Foundation for Suicide: Resources for Discussing Suicide with Children and Adolescents](#)

[Code Blue’s Conversation Starters for People Experiencing Thoughts of Suicide](#)

Q5 *How important is it for an individual to be able to identify and understand their risk and protective factors for suicide?*

A5 If we had to choose one thing to help our youth and decrease rates of suicide it would be to teach suicidal awareness or the ability to identify and understand risk/protective factors and warning signs for suicide. In fact, at the middle school and high-school level, the trend is to teach youth and teachers suicide awareness and referral steps at a school-wide level as a universal type of intervention. In this way, we are able to intervene much earlier, before a situation becomes a crisis and get students the help they deserve.

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