

Spring Call to Action for Schools: Equip staff, students, and caregivers in suicide prevention during spring transition time

This is an **urgent request to all elementary, middle, and high school leaders to equip your school community to identify students who may be at risk of suicide and to refer those students to help.** In spring of each year, Oregon experiences an increase in youth suicide [attempts and deaths](#).

To be clear, youth suicide is largely preventable and there are often signs. Schools hold immense power to recognize risk, create safety, and link students to lifesaving supports. Additionally, building a school culture of open, thoughtful conversation about mental health and encouraging help-seeking among students helps prevent suicide. With attention, support, good training and thoughtful measures, schools can increase protection and reduce the risk of suicide.

Having a trusted adult protects a young person from suicide risk. As a youth-serving adult and a school leader, your wellness is also essential to the well-being of the students in your school. Please consider your own well-being as you take steps to support your students.

We know that suicide is complex, and there is not one strategy or youth-serving system that can prevent suicide alone. While recognizing and advocating for a wide range of strategies and actions needed to keep students safe, we wanted to highlight one in particular: talking about **secure firearm storage**. We echo the [American Psychological Association's recent resolution](#) in "promoting knowledge in secure firearms storage strategies and lethal means safety" as a preventative measure. We'd also like to pass along [this recent letter](#) from U.S. Secretary of Education Cardona to school principals and district administrators on this topic. It includes helpful resources, information, and a [customizable letter template](#) that school and district administrators can use to encourage safe firearm storage within their community.

Additionally, we've created three guides below for you to use to increase your school community's skill in and readiness for creating safety for students.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business. Thank you for finding ways to make it yours!

Together,

Jill Baker & Shanda Hochstetler
Youth Suicide Prevention
Oregon Health Authority

Nole Kennedy
Student Wellness & Safety
Oregon Dept of Education

Shay Clarke & Craig Leets
School Suicide Prevention
Youthline at Lines for Life

For Administrators

Suicide prevention checklist

This spring, review these parts of your school district's Act suicide prevention, intervention and postvention plan for your building. If your district needs support writing or updating its plan, contact your regional [School Safety and Prevention Specialist](#) or the [Safe and Inclusive Schools team](#) at Oregon Department of Education.

- ☐ **Staff training** (OHA-recommended [training options for school staff by role](#))
 - What suicide prevention training do faculty and staff receive? When is staff suicide prevention training scheduled?
 - What suicide prevention training do school counselors and other mental health staff receive? Do any of your staff need renewed training?
- ☐ **Building-level process for referring students demonstrating risk or warning signs**
 - What is your school process for connecting a student to help? How are your staff being reminded of that process? Do your teachers and support staff know where and how to refer a student?
 - In the event of risk for suicide, is there a backup plan in case trained staff are unavailable?
 - Who in your building experiences increased risk and what is being done to intentionally increase belonging and connection, particularly for [LGBTQ2SIA+](#) students and students of color?
- ☐ **Curriculum: Suicide prevention lessons** (Find curriculum options on [pages 26-31](#))
 - When are your students receiving classroom lessons on mental health and suicide prevention?
No-Cost Elementary Options:
 - [Erika's Lighthouse](#) – Level 1 lessons for older elementary (Free curriculum with free account to access)
 - Sources of Strength [Elementary](#) (Costs supported by OHA)No-Cost Middle/High Options:
 - [Erika's Lighthouse](#) – Level 2 lessons for middle school, Level 2/3 for older middle school and high school (Free curriculum with free account to access)
 - [Work 2 Be Well](#) – Resources for counselors and educators around topics related to mental health (Free curriculum accessed by entering an email address.)
- ☐ **Student caregiver and community awareness**

Suggested Action: Use [this template](#) from the U.S. Department of Education to send a letter to families to remind them to secure their firearms. Reminding families to secure firearms provides protection for our school communities by reducing suicide deaths and reducing school violence.

 - How are you [communicating](#) your school suicide prevention activities and [resources](#) to your students' homes?
 - How are you referring students and their families to [get-help resources](#) when risk is identified?
 - What [culturally and linguistically specific resources](#) have you identified for your students?
- ☐ **Staff wellness support**
 - How are you building in [wellness](#) supports for your [staff](#)? How are you taking care of yourself?
Option: [Educator Self-care Card](#)
- ☐ **Does your school have visible and accessible resources for mental health support, such as YouthLine posters, brochures, and wristbands?** Consider ordering no-cost materials from [YouthLine](#) (shipping costs not included).

For School Counselors and Mental Health Staff

- ☐ **Do staff at your school know how and when to refer a student to you?** Do staff at your school know how to identify when a student needs an immediate check-in with you because of heightened risk or warning signs?
- ☐ **Do you know what forms to fill out if you receive a referral from staff about a student who may be at risk for suicide?** Do you know where to submit or store the forms?
- ☐ **Do you have enough training in brief suicide screening and basic safety planning?** If not, consider taking both [ASIST](#) and [Youth SAVE](#).
- ☐ **Do you know where to refer a student who demonstrates risk of suicide after you've screened them?**
- ☐ **Do you know how to access crisis services or supports for a student that you identify as having imminent risk for suicide?**
- ☐ **Do you have another school counselor or mental health staff that you can consult with if you have a complex situation?**
- ☐ **Does your school have visible and accessible resources for mental health support, such as YouthLine posters, brochures, and wristbands?** Consider ordering no-cost materials from [YouthLine](#) (shipping costs not included).

Resources:

- [Practicing Strength at home](#) – An Oregon Sources of Strength packet with a wellness plan that is a great tool for working with students (and for staff). It has the Sources of Strength wheel with definitions and a tool to identify strengths on the wheel. It has strengths-based conversation starters that would work for counselors or for classrooms.
- If your school lacks staff to provide suicide safety assessments and safety planning, please call or text 988 or your [local crisis hotline](#).
- The Oregon Sources of Strength team is developing Elementary Tier 2 lessons that can be used with groups or individuals. To access these lessons at no cost, contact Darci at Darci@matchstickpdx.com.
- [Sources of Strength - Resources for at-home](#) – A packet Sources of Strength created when schools were meeting virtually. It remains a great tool for counselors to use with students or groups, teachers to use in classrooms, for use in staff meetings, or to give to families to use at home.
- 25 [ideas](#) for check-in questions. Connection and belonging are suicide prevention.
- [Work 2 Be Well](#) – Resources for counselors and educators around topics related to mental health. (Free curriculum and tools accessed by entering an email address.)

For Students and Families



For 24/7 support in English, Spanish, and ASL:

The suicide and crisis lifeline never closes, it is always open for calls, texts, and chats. [Learn more.](#)



For older elementary, middle or high school students:

YouthLine, a teen-to-teen help, support, and crisis is open daily from 4 to 10 p.m. Pacific Time via call, text, and chat. Adults answer phone calls at all other times for support 24/7. [Learn more.](#)



For all ages:

No-cost resources to stay strong, create a wellness plan, care for yourself, and practice gratitude. [Learn more.](#)



For students and families:

When life feels heavy, Safe + Strong has resources to help. Connect to care, learn how to make sense of what you're going through, and get tips for supporting a loved one who is struggling. [Learn more.](#)



Report concerns about suicide risk for you or someone else:

[SafeOregon](#) is a program created for Oregon students, families, school staff, community members, and law enforcement officers to report and respond to student safety threats – including suicide risk. NOTE: This tip line is not for immediate emergency response. Crisis situations should always go to 911 or 988.