

MTSS for Suicide Prevention and Intervention

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KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- School counselors have an ethical responsibility to identify behavioral and social/emotional signs of suicide risk among their students and ensure prevention methods are in place.
- A first step in preventing suicide is to promote a positive school climate by implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Restorative Practices, and Trauma-Informed Social Emotional Learning.
- Developing supportive relationships with students and being transparent about the limits to confidentiality is essential in building trust with students.
- Suicide prevention education includes identifying and dispelling common myths about suicide, identifying risk factors, warning signs. It is also essential to educate students about how to respond when someone is suicidal, counseling referral process, exploring suicide prevention resources, and having students explore coping strategies.
- When interviewing students to determine the risk of suicide, it is vital to consider suicidal ideation, intent, plan, and prior history with suicide.
- If suicide risk assessments are used, it is important to note that determining a suicide risk level should never be done in isolation. Instead, it should be done as a team, with the goal being to align supports and not diagnose/label a student.
- Suicide contracts are not effective and should never be used. It is best practice to develop student safety plans with students instead.
- When becoming aware of a student considering suicide, school counselors should assert their ethical and legal responsibility to report suspected suicide risk to parents/guardians and the appropriate authorities.
- The document should include the student's identifying information, assessment date, crisis team member, referral source, the reason for the referral, suicidal behavior, previous suicide assessments, and interventions.
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- When a student is released from the hospital due to suicide risk, it is crucial to conduct a re-entry meeting to identify if any school-related issues may trigger. At that meeting, identify ongoing mental health resources, consider accommodations and determine if a special education assessment is needed
- Some ongoing support can include designating a staff member to check in with the student and delivering evidence-based interventions as needed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What am I doing to promote a positive school climate?
- How am I intentionally developing supportive relationships with students?
- What are key elements can I incorporate into my suicide prevention presentation for students, staff, and parents/guardians?
- What factors should I consider when interviewing a student at-risk of suicide?
- How can I support students after they have been discharged from the hospital?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Resource Folder](#)
- [Virginia Department of Education Suicide Prevention Resources](#): This site offers professional learning and resources related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
- [Suicide Prevention Guidelines for Virginia Public Schools](#): Adopted by the Board of Education in June, 2020, provides information to assist local school boards in revising policies to help prevent suicide and procedures to intervene when suicidal threats are present, and how to manage the crisis response when a death by suicide occurs in the school community.
- [Virginia Department of Health Recognize Talk Act Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#): Educational materials and print-ready social media communication templates that schools can use.
- [Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Lock and Talk Virginia](#): Promote the importance of limiting access to lethal means for a person with suicide thoughts by providing free safety devices to secure guns and medications and offer free educational materials and guidelines about storing and securing lethal means.
- [Virginia Chapter: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#): This chapter offers information about risk factors and warning signs, raise funds for suicide research and programs, and reach out to those individuals who have lost someone to suicide.
- [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#): A confidential and anonymous source of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. Territories for substance use/addiction and/or mental health problems developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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