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Acting State Superintendent of Schools

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
PREPARING WORLD CLASS STUDENTS

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October 5, 2017

The Honorable Larry Hogan
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
H-107 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
H-101 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

RE: Youth Suicide Prevention School Program Report (MSAR #540)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Miller, and Speaker Busch:

This letter is intended to fulfill the reporting summary required by Sections 7-505 and 7-506 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1986. Sections 7-501 through 7-504 require schools to establish youth suicide programs that include staff development, classroom programs of instruction, crisis intervention, and other related policies and procedures. Sections 7-505 and 7-506 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to allocate funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that submit proposals pursuant to certain criteria and to submit a summary of the LEA reports to the Governor and the General Assembly.

As currently written, Section 7-506(c) of the statute states that the Governor shall include funds in the budget designated for the Youth Suicide Prevention Program. From 1986 to 2006, funds were distributed through the MSDE to LEAs to support youth suicide prevention programming in schools. Additionally, Section 7-505(b)(4) directs the MSDE to seek federal funds available under the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. These federal funds are now managed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Behavioral Health Administration. Currently, there are no available funds through the MSDE to support these programs.

The MSDE has continually supported the development of youth prevention programs within LEAs since the passage of Sections 7-501 through 7-504 which authorized schools to establish youth suicide programs. This initiative is currently accomplished through collaboration and partnerships with the MDH and various community agencies. As a result, various programs have become an integral component of school-wide and system-wide planning.

Youth suicide prevention curriculum is now taught as a valuable component of the comprehensive health program in public schools and all LEAs have a designated point of contact that facilitates the implementation of the suicide prevention program. The 24 LEAs and the SEED School of Maryland continue to annually develop and implement youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies.

Many LEAs utilize evidence-based programs to provide gatekeeper trainings to school staff and students. Evidence-based programs include Yellow Ribbon, ASSIST K-12, Question, Persuade and Referral, and Self Talk. The MSDE also sponsor an annual suicide prevention professional development conference which is attended by the 25 local suicide prevention points of contact. Suicide prevention continues to be a topic at administrative meetings for local Directors of Student Services. The professional development highlights and disseminates best practices, resources, and identification of programs and implementation strategies. In addition, staff at the MSDE, among their other duties, are assigned to assist youth suicide prevention initiatives in schools and serve as members of the statewide Suicide Prevention Task Force. The MSDE will continue these efforts and seek additional avenues that will assist in accomplishment of the initiative.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Mary L. Gable, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Student, Family and School Support at (410) 767-0275 or by email at mary.gable@maryland.gov.

Best Regards,

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools