



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

October 15, 2018

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 §§ 7-505 and 7-506 of the Education Article of the 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, and crisis intervention. Sections 7-505 and 7-506 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, § 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, § 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 §§ 7-501 through 7-504 authorizing schools to establish youth suicide programs, including staff development, classroom programs of instruction, crisis intervention, and other related policies and procedures. This initiative is being accomplished through collaboration and partnerships with the MDH and various community agencies. These programs have become an integral component of Governor Hogan's, President Miller's, and Speaker Busch's school-wide and system-wide planning.

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As a result of §§ 7-501 through 7-504, youth suicide prevention curriculum is now taught as a part of the comprehensive health program in public schools. In addition, on July 24, 2018, the State Board of Education granted permission to adopt COMAR 13A.07.11 Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training which requires each LEA to provide annual training to all certificated school staff to (1) understand and respond to youth suicide risk; (2) understand and respond to student mental health, student trauma, student safety, and other topics related to student social and emotional well-being; and (3) identify professional resources to help students in crisis.

The MSDE sponsors an annual suicide prevention professional development activity attended by the 25 local suicide prevention points of contact. 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; Signs of Suicide; ASSIST K-12; Question, Persuade and Referral; and Self Talk.

Suicide prevention continues to be a topic at administrative meetings for local Directors of Student Services, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, school social workers, and pupil personnel workers. The professional development highlights and disseminates best practices, resources, identification of programs, and implementation strategies. Professional development also highlights available resources to assist students in crisis in local LEAs across the state. 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 Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention. The MSDE intends to continue these efforts.

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

Best Regards,



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State Superintendent of Schools

C: Sarah Albert (DLS Library – 5 copies)