



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Michael Sentance
State Superintendent of Education

September 16, 2016

Alabama
State Board
of Education

MEMORANDUM

Governor
Robert Bentley
President

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

Matthew S. Brown, J.D.
District I

FROM: Michael Sentance *MS*
State Superintendent of Education

Betty Peters
District II

RE: The *Jason Flatt Act*: Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Model Policy

Stephanie Bell
District III

In response to the *Jason Flatt Act* (Act #2016-310), the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Prevention and Support Services Section, and the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee have developed the attached Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Model Policy for local education agencies (LEAs) to use in the development of their local board policy. The Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee is a collaboration of the ALSDE and other organizations as directed under the *Jason Flatt Act* to include, but not limited to, the School Superintendents of Alabama, the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, the Alabama Education Association, the Alabama Association of School Boards, the Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation, and other pertinent mental health and suicide prevention organizations.

Yvette M.
Richardson, Ed.D.
District IV
Vice President

Ella B. Bell
District V

It is the intent of this policy to ensure that **ALL** Alabama students in Grades K-12 are provided with the curriculum and resources necessary to participate in programs in an effort to prevent student suicide. To support LEAs in this effort, the ALSDE and the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee will be providing information on resources for staff training and curriculum for students to assist school systems/schools as they develop practices and procedures in support of your policy.

Cynthia McCarty, Ph.D.
District VI

Jeff Newman
District VII

If you have any further questions, you may contact Dr. Erica Butler or Dr. Marilyn Lewis, Prevention and Support Services Section, by telephone at 334-242-8165 or by e-mail at ebutler@alsde.edu or mlewis@alsde.edu.

Mary Scott Hunter, J.D.
District VIII
President Pro Tem

Michael Sentance
Secretary and
Executive Officer

MS/EB/CT

Attachments

FY16-2087

THE JASON FLATT ACT
State of Alabama
SB11
Youth Suicide Awareness & Prevention
Enacted May 5, 2016
Model Policy on Alabama's Jason Flatt Act

Introduction

Suicide is the tenth cause of death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, the cause of death rankings are 2nd and 3rd in the nation, and these rankings are higher for youth in the same age brackets in the state of Alabama. The *Jason Flatt Act* was passed in order to equip education institutions and their personnel to recognize and act on signs of suicide risk in order to provide prevention, intervention and postvention with students at risk, their families and the communities who may be affected.

The *Jason Flatt Act*, which amends the 16-28B-8 of the Code of Alabama 1975, includes several elements listed below (*in italics*) which should be interpreted as Policy. "To the extent that the legislature shall appropriate funds, or to the extent that any local board may provide funds from other sources, each school system shall implement the following standards and policies for programs in an effort to prevent student suicide":

Section 1. Prevention of Suicide

The *Jason Flatt Act* was passed in order to equip Alabama school districts and their personnel to recognize and act on signs of suicide risk in order to provide prevention, intervention and postvention with students at risk, their families and the communities who may be affected. This act, which amends 16-28B-8 of the *Code of Alabama 1975*, includes prevention of harassment and violence.

Section 2. The *Jason Flatt Act* includes several elements which should be interpreted as Policy. School systems will:

- (1) *Foster individual, family, and group counseling services related to suicide prevention.*
- (2) *Make referral, crisis intervention, and other related information available for students, parents, and school personnel.*
- (3) *Foster training for school personnel who are responsible for counseling and supervising students.*
- (4) *Increase student awareness of the relationship between drug and alcohol use and suicide.*
- (5) *Educate students in recognizing signs of suicidal tendencies and other facts and warning signs of suicide.*
- (6) *Inform students of available community suicide prevention services.*
- (7) *Promote cooperative efforts between school personnel and community suicide prevention program personnel.*
- (8) *Foster school-based or community-based, or both, alternative programs outside of the classroom.*
- (9) *Develop a strategy to assist survivors of attempted suicide, students, and school personnel in coping with the issues relating to attempted suicide, suicide, the death of a student, and healing.*

(10) *Engage in any other program or activity which the local board determines is appropriate and prudent in the efforts of the school system to prevent student suicide.*

(11) *Provide training for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students on the local board policies to prevent harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence.*

(12) *Develop a process for discussing with students local board policies relating to the prevention of student suicide and to the prevention of harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence.*

(13) *Provide annual training for all certificated school employees in suicide awareness and prevention. This training may be provided within the framework of existing inservice training programs or as a part of required professional development offered by the local school system.*

Section 3. Description of Behavior Expected of Students

Students are expected to treat other students with courtesy, respect, and dignity and comply with the Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected and required to (1) comply with the requirements of the law, policy, regulation, and rules prohibiting harassment, violence, or intimidation and (2) to comply with the system's prevention strategies related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention support.

Section 4. Responsibility of Reporting

Any person involved in a cause of action or omission resulting from the implementation of this suicide prevention policy or resulting from any training, or lack thereof, required by this section, shall be subject to state immunity law.

Section 5. Promulgation of Policy and Related Procedures, Rules and Forms

This policy and any procedures and rules developed and approved to implement the policy will be published, disseminated, and made available to students, parents and legal guardians, and employees by such means and methods as are customarily used for such purposes, including publication on the (local board's) Web site.

**Alabama State Department of Education
Prevention and Support Services
Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee
August 1-2, 2016**

Ms. Allison Faircloth
Chairperson Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee
Executive Director
Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation

Dr. David Coombs
Professor
University of Alabama Birmingham

Mrs. Wanda Langley
Counseling and Guidance
Alabama State Department of Education

Dr. Judith Harrington
Assistant Professor
University of Montevallo

Ms. Betsy Cagle
Injury Prevention Programs Manager
Alabama Department of Public Health

Ms. Lauren Blanding
Office of Prevention
Alabama Department of Mental Health

Ms. Janet Shaw Gabel
Executive Director
Crisis Services of North Alabama

Dr. Marilyn Lewis
Program Coordinator
Prevention and Support Services
Alabama State Department of Education

Ms. Chalise Peltier
Prevention Educator
Lifelines Counseling Services

Ms. Mary Hooks
Macon County Board of Education
Alabama of Education Association of
Schools Board

Dr. Sheila Remington
President/Executive Director
Alabama Education Association

Mrs. Amy Bryan
Superintendent
Butler County Board of Education
School Superintendents Association

Dr. Tamala Maddox
Principal
Bumpus Middle School
CLAS

Mrs. Elana Parker Merriweather
Health Services Administrator
Alabama Department of Public Health

Dr. Erica Butler
Education Specialist
Prevention and Support Services
Alabama State Department of Education

Mr. Gregory DeJarnett
Education Administrator
Prevention and Support Services
Alabama State Department of Education