



Memorandum

To: School Administrators, School Counselors, and other school leaders

From: Jill Baker & Shanda Hochstetler, Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinators

Date: August 14, 2023

Subject: Call to Action - Suicide Prevention preparation for Fall

Each year, youth suicide [attempts and deaths](#) increase in the fall often corresponding to the start of the school year. This season of increased risk is a 20-year national trend, can be seen in many countries around the [world](#), and is also seen in [Oregon](#). This memo, and the supporting documents, are **an urgent request to all elementary, middle, and high school leaders to prepare your school community to be better equipped to identify students who may be at risk of suicide and to refer those students to help.**

The Oregon Health Authority monitors youth suicide data through county reports of youth suicide deaths and through the state medical examiner's office. These data are preliminary and not public due to being potentially identifiable. As of July 2023, the total number of youth suicide deaths in 2023 are similar to 2022. However, in that same timeframe, OHA has identified a higher-than-average number of youth suicide deaths in children 14 and younger. Because of this concerning uptick regarding younger youth, **we are asking those serving students in grades 4-9 to pay particular attention to their suicide prevention and suicide intervention policies and procedures.** To support this, you will find resources specific to elementary, middle, and high schools in this packet.

To be clear, youth suicide is largely preventable and there are almost always signs. Schools hold immense power to recognize risk, create safety, and to link students to lifesaving supports. With attention, supports, good training and thoughtful measures, schools can increase safety for our students against the risk of suicide. We also know that suicide is complex, and there is not one strategy or youth-serving system that can prevent suicide alone.

A trusted adult is one of the most impactful protective factors a young person can experience. As a youth-serving adult and school leader, your wellness is also essential to the wellbeing of the students in your school(s). Please consider your own well-being as you take steps towards supporting your students.

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