



Oregon Law and Best Practice Involving Parents, Guardians and Trusted Adults in Youth Suicide Prevention

Balancing the rights and responsibility of parents to protect their children while honoring the rights for youth 14-17 year old to confidentially to seek and receive treatment is complex. Legislation (HB3139) passed in 2021 clarified the requirement of licensed mental health and medical health providers to disclose information to parents, guardians and other trusted adults about a youth’s risk to suicide. The Alliance conducted town halls with parents and guardians to find out what they wanted to know in regard to how the changes affects communications with their child’s counselor, social worker, therapist, peer provider or other behavioral health specialist if their child is at risk of suicide.

The following provides information about what a counselor must share as well as tips for safety planning, helpline resources and FAQ’s.

Did You Know

In Oregon the law allows youth 14-17 years old the right to receive certain health services, such as mental and medical health and/or substance use services, without the knowledge or consent of their parent(s) and/or guardian(s). Providers of these services are urged to involve parents, guardians and/or trusted adults in the treatment process, however, they are not required to do so.

The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide is a statewide advocacy and advisory group to the Oregon Health Authority working to prevent youth suicide. The legislation described here was championed by parents who lost a daughter to suicide. The Alliance wants to be sure that parents, caregivers and youth are aware of their rights in order to

Behavioral and medical health providers are required to share information with parents and/or guardian and/or a trusted adult identified by the youth when a 14-17 year-old is at “**serious and imminent risk**” of suicide. It is a best practice, when possible, for providers to include the youth in the disclosure process.

Why Disclosure is Important

The purpose of disclosing information about the “serious and imminent” risk of suicide is to engage adults in safety planning and to reduce access to lethal means such as firearms, ligatures, medications, and alcohol/drugs. Safety plans should always be developed with youth and whenever possible include the family. A safety plan includes strategies to keep youth safe and help prevent suicide. As a parent or guardian, you may find it helpful to ask your child and their counselor or therapist if there is a safety plan in place and how you might support that plan.

If you or your child or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Text or call **988** or chat **988Lifeline.org**.

Frequently Asked Questions

When is a provider required to disclose private information of a young person between 14-17 years of age?

Oregon House Bill 3139/ORS 109.680 went into effect January 1, 2022. The law REQUIRES licensed medical and mental health care providers to disclose information about a minor's treatment and diagnosis as clinically appropriate regarding a serious and imminent risk of suicide.

The goal of disclosing to parents, legal guardians and other youth identified trusted adults is to increase support and safety for youth.

What exactly is the provider required to disclose once a serious and imminent risk to suicide is identified?

The provider is only required to disclose information that is necessary to protect the young person's immediate safety.

Who is the provider required to disclose this information to?

The provider is required to disclose to parents, legal guardians, or trusted adult who may protect the youth through safety planning. It is a best practice, when possible, for providers to include the youth in the disclosure process.

Exceptions to this requirement:

- Reasonable belief of abuse or domestic violence against youth
- Parents and/or guardian are the root cause of the young person's mental health challenge
- Youth would be endangered by sharing information or it is not in the youth's best interests
- Legal emancipation or 90-day separation from family

Providers may also disclose a youth's suicidality to:

- Parents or guardians if inpatient treatment or detoxification is necessary
- Trusted adults, schools, and social services as part of treatment support

What steps can I take to protect the safety of my child?

- Work with your child and their mental health provider(s) to develop a safety plan and identify "trusted adults" who can provide support during and after a mental health crisis
- Begin conversations about feelings and mental health at an early age. It's OK to seek outside help with these conversations.
- Talk to your child about depression and suicide. Ask directly, "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- Remove or lock up lethal means in the home: medications, firearms, and/or alcohol/drugs.
- Contact Reach Out Oregon's warm line for help identifying resources for your child and your family and to talk to a trained peer parent. (833) 732-2437 <https://www.reachoutoregon.org>
- Remember you can **text or call 988 or chat 988Lifeline.org**

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