

YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION REFERRAL AND TRACKING TOOLKIT

Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program



Approaches to Early Identification of Youth at Elevated Risk for Suicide

This toolkit may be useful for tracking information related to any early identification approach. Each school should identify the approach or combination of approaches that would work best in its community. Two primary approaches used by schools are screening and gatekeeper surveillance. While both approaches aim to identify youth with possible increased risk for suicide, the two approaches differ. Furthermore, these should not necessarily be seen as mutually exclusive strategies, and many programs effectively combine these approaches for a more robust student safety net.

Screening	Gatekeeper Surveillance
Usually involves administering a standard assessment that identifies students who may be at risk for suicide.	Involves training adults in a setting to recognize students demonstrating signs of suicide risk.
Takes place within a specified period of time, and is carried out by a limited number of people in the school setting.	Is ongoing throughout the academic year, and relies on the participation of a larger number of people.
Results in information about students with suicide risks that can be compiled and used in a school's prevention and intervention efforts.	Does not have a built-in way to capture information about students who are identified as at risk for suicide. This lack of information can leave school personnel questioning the impact of their efforts.

Extensive information and resources about approaches to youth suicide prevention are available through the Suicide Prevention Resource Center at <http://www.sprc.org>

Lessons Learned From the MYSPP Evaluation

The evaluation of the MYSPP's Lifelines program was designed to compare schools that participated in one of the funded projects to implement Lifelines and comparison schools that had not participated in one of the funded projects. Comparison schools were not restricted from participating in trainings offered by the MYSPP. The broad lessons learned in the evaluation included:

- 1) Schools that implement the Lifelines program do identify and refer more students for risk of suicide than schools that do not have the program in place.
- 2) While the schools identify and refer students at risk, they may struggle to document information about the youth who are identified and the circumstances that lead to the identification. Schools that struggle to capture the data often lack clear, consistent communication protocols related to youth at risk for suicide. Providing suicide prevention awareness training that includes a review of written protocols on the actions to take if personnel are concerned about a student is critical to enhancing early identification and referral and to establishing a clear chain of communication. The School Suicide Intervention Protocol Chart on page 19 provides a sample visual that schools can adapt and provide to teachers and other staff to remind them of the protocols and chain of communication.
- 3) When there is a clear chain of communication regarding concern about a student at risk for suicide, the person at the end of the chain is the best person to record information about the identification and referral.

These lessons learned highlight the importance of a systematic process for data collection in order to ensure the timely referral of at-risk youth.

More information about the guidelines for coordinating communication and referrals recommended to schools in Maine is available at
<http://www.maine.gov/suicide/http://www.maine.gov/suicide/docs/Guidelines%2010-2009--w%20discl.pdf>