

Suicide Prevention in K-12 Schools

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for young people ages 10-19. Schools are in a prime position to address and support student mental health and to help prevent suicide.

The Facts



Nearly all measures of student mental health and suicidal thoughts and behaviors **have worsened** over the last decade.



1 in 5 high school students in the U.S. reported seriously considering attempting suicide in 2023.



The first onset of mental illness typically occurs in **childhood or adolescence**.

AFSP Recommendations

- Schools should establish and regularly update suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention policies (see afsp.org/ModelSchoolPolicy)
- School personnel and students should be trained and educated regularly in suicide prevention and mental health literacy
- The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline should be included on student IDs, and school absences for mental health reasons should be excused

Background

- Mental health is central to student success and wellbeing, and schools have a critical role to play in helping students and families access the information, resources, and supports needed to address mental health concerns and prevent suicide
- A key step in preventing youth suicide is early detection of students who are at risk or struggling and connecting those students and their families to resources and services
- Educating students on suicide prevention and mental health literacy can empower them to know when and how to reach out for help when they notice warning signs in themselves or peers
- Normalizing mental health as a part of overall health creates more transparency with students and parents, reinforces that it is a sign of strength to seek help, and increases the likelihood that students will connect with the services they need

Engaging with young people in schools – where they spend much of their time – is vital to implementing effective suicide prevention strategies and can help save lives.

