

Resource for Iowa Code 279.70 Protocols & Training

Suicide Prevention/Postvention, Adverse Childhood Experiences, Mitigate Toxic Stress Response

Introduction

Since July 1, 2019, legislation requires schools to provide annual school employee training and protocols relating to:

- Suicide prevention and postvention
- Identification of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Strategies to mitigate toxic stress response

In addition, legislation requires schools that issue identification cards to secondary students to include suicide prevention information.

These resources are provided to assist schools in interpreting and implementing [Iowa Code 279.70](#) and [IAC 281-14.4](#), which apply to all public schools in Iowa.

Definitions

Legal Definitions

[Iowa Code 279.70](#) – Training on suicide prevention, ACEs identification, and toxic stress response mitigation strategies

[Iowa Code 279.70A](#) – Suicide prevention information on student identification cards

Definitions within Iowa Code 279.70

“Adverse childhood experience” means a potentially traumatic event occurring in childhood that can have negative, lasting effects on an individual’s health and well-being.”

“Postvention” means the provision of crisis intervention, support, and assistance for those affected by a suicide or suicide attempt to prevent further risk of suicide.”

School District Requirements

Since July 1, 2019, Iowa school districts have been required to adopt protocols and require training for all school personnel who hold a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the Board of Educational Examiners and who have regular contact with students in kindergarten through grade twelve.

Protocol Adoption:

School districts shall adopt protocols for suicide prevention and postvention, and the identification of adverse childhood experiences and strategies to mitigate toxic stress response. The protocols shall be based on nationally recognized best practices.

Suicide Prevention/Postvention Training shall:

- Be completed annually by all school personnel as described above
- Be at least one hour in length
- Be evidence-based, evidence-supported, with content based on nationally recognized best practices
- Must be provided annually between July 1 and June 30
- Must include both prevention and postvention

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Strategies to Mitigate Toxic Stress Response shall:

- Recommended minimum 60 minutes
- Be evidence-based, evidence-supported

Suicide Prevention Information on Student Identification Cards

As of July 1, 2023, a public school that issues identification cards to students in grades seven through twelve shall include on either side of the identification card the crisis hotline telephone and text numbers and the internet address for Your Life Iowa or the Your Life Iowa successor program.

A public school that issues identification cards to students in grades five and six may include, on either side of the identification card, the crisis hotline telephone and text numbers, and the internet address for Your Life Iowa or its successor program.

Resources

The following resources are provided to supplement the Iowa Department of Education's official guidance for Iowa Code section 279.70. The purpose is to support schools in implementing the requirements of Iowa Code 279.70 and IAC 281—14.4. The content focuses on nationally recognized best practices for suicide prevention and postvention training.

Training Selection and Implementation

1. Suicide prevention policies and protocols should be in place before suicide prevention trainings are implemented. Before training school staff to recognize suicide risks, it is essential that procedures and appropriate supports are in place.
2. In selecting training, look for programs that have evidence related to the desired outcomes and priority populations in your district.
3. Local school districts are responsible and have authority for selecting the evidence-based, evidence-supported suicide prevention and postvention training that best fits the needs of their district.

Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Trainings

Suicide prevention trainings designed to teach people to identify individuals who are showing warning signs of suicide risk and help these individuals get the services they need are called “Gatekeeper” trainings. The idea is to train adult “gatekeepers” to recognize and help an individual in accessing appropriate supports. Research tells us that to be most effective, Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper trainings should be a part of a school and community’s comprehensive suicide prevention plan. According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org), a comprehensive approach should include these key components:

- Promote emotional well-being and connectedness among all students.
- Identify students who may be at risk for suicide and assist them in getting help
- Be prepared to respond when a suicide death occurs

Postvention Trainings

Be prepared to respond when a suicide death occurs. Iowa Code 281-14.4 (1) defines postvention as “the provision of crisis intervention, support, and assistance for those affected by a suicide or suicide attempt to prevent further risk of suicide.” The Suicide Prevention Resource Center website states that all settings should incorporate postvention as part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention. [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, Second Edition](#), provides detailed guidance for postvention, including templates and tools for communication and planning. Part of postvention training for school staff should include a review of the school’s suicide protocols. While the level of involvement may vary for different staff, it is important that everyone knows their role in suicide prevention.

It is important to note that the list of training included is not exhaustive. It is the intention that this list be helpful for schools in considering a menu of possible trainings.

Suicide Prevention

- The [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
 - The [Best Practices Registry \(BPR\)](#) from the National Suicide Prevention Resource Center is a vetted resource library of programs and interventions that apply suicide prevention frameworks for specific populations and uses.
 - [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools assists schools in implementing a coordinated response to the suicide death of a student.](#)
- [University of Iowa Center of Behavioral Excellence](#)
- [AEA Learning Online](#) and some Iowa Area Education Agencies provide training on these topics

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- [Iowa ACES360](#) training
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ACEs [Educator Module](#)
- [AEA Learning Online](#) and some Iowa Area Education Agencies provide training on these topics.

Support Resources

Your Life Iowa

The Iowa Department of Public Health created <https://YourLifeIowa.org> to provide help for alcohol, drug and gambling problems, and suicidal thoughts. Support and assistance is available through Live Chat or by calling **(855) 581-8111**, or by texting **(855) 895-8398**.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call **988** on your phone or text **988** on your smartphone any time, day or night. You can also **chat using the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for free, 24/7**.

The national 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a network of local crisis centers that provide free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the US. From kids to grandparents to college students, 988 has trained crisis counselors who can help Iowans of any age.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Hearing Loss: The network of crisis centers offers many services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Mental Health Resources

[Mental Health Resources--State of Iowa website](#)