July 13, 2026

Protocols and Training for Suicide Prevention and Postvention

Introduction

School districts must do the following according to Iowa law:

- Adopt protocols for suicide prevention and postvention based on nationally recognized best practices (Iowa Code 256.7)
- Require annually the following evidence-based trainings 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 (Iowa Code 279.70)
    - suicide prevention and postvention (at least one hour)
    - the identification of adverse childhood experiences and strategies to mitigate toxic stress response
- Include suicide prevention information on identification cards for secondary students (Iowa Code 279.70A)

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. The protocols shall be based on nationally recognized best practices. (Protocol requirements were amended in 2026 by House File 2670)

Training

Suicide Prevention/Postvention Training

- Be completed annually between July 1 and June 30 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
- Be at least one hour in length
- Be evidence-based, evidence-supported with content based on nationally recognized best practices
- Include both prevention and postvention

ACEs Training

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and strategies to mitigate toxic stress response training must be offered annually for identified school personnel and be evidence-based, evidence-supported with content based on nationally recognized best practices.

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.

Optional Resources

The following resources are provided to support schools in implementing training requirements. The lists of trainings and resources is not exhaustive.

Training Selection and Implementation

1. Suicide prevention policies and protocols should be in place before suicide prevention trainings are implemented.
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, 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 279.70 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." While the level of involvement may vary for different staff, it is important that everyone knows their role who do go to for additional support in suicide prevention and postvention.

Suicide Prevention and Postvention Resources

- Best Practices Registry (BPR) from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center
- 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 Excellence for Behavioral Health
- 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
- 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's Your Life Iowa provides a variety of support and assistance online and through Live Chat, phone call **(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 facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug concerns or just need someone to talk to.

Mental Health Resources

Mental Health Resources (State of Iowa)