

**West Virginia Board of Education
Implementation Guidelines for the Jason Flatt Act of 2012
Suicide Prevention Professional Development for School Personnel**

Effective June 15, 2012

The West Virginia Legislature recognized that youth suicide is a leading cause of death among school aged youth and, therefore, passed the Jason Flatt Act of 2012 which becomes effective on July 1, 2012.

West Virginia Code §18A-3A-2(5) Provide for the routine education of all professional educators, including principals and administrators, and those service personnel having direct contact with students on warning signs and resources to assist in suicide prevention under guidelines established by the state board. The education may be accomplished through self review of suicide prevention materials and resources approved by the state board. The provisions of this paragraph may be known and cited as the “Jason Flatt Act of 2012”;

The following guidance is provided to support the implementation of this statute:

Background

The West Virginia Board of Education’s vision for West Virginia students is for them to develop into healthy, responsible, and self-directed citizens who have the knowledge and Global21 skills to lead satisfying and productive lives. Within this vision is a goal for all students to develop the personal skills and dispositions of wellness, responsibility, self direction, ethical character, cultural awareness and good citizenship in an environment that is caring and safe.

West Virginia Board of Education Policy 4373: Expected Behaviors in Safe and Supportive Schools provides the procedural framework to assist county school systems in their efforts to create the climate/culture that supports development of the dispositions that are valued in our communities, state, nation and world. School climate/culture refers to the quality and character of school life and its responsibilities to student success and growth. A sustainable, positive school climate/culture fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. It includes norms, values and expectations that support students feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. Policy 4373 also references other West Virginia Board of Education policies that are essential in supporting the development of positive school climate/culture that will also support suicide prevention efforts within school settings. The Board’s vision for healthy student development is foundational to school based contributions to suicide prevention.

Professional Development Guidelines

1. Suicide prevention training for staff (professional staff and service personnel having direct contact with students) shall be integrated within professional development efforts to support school climate/culture improvements so that resulting action is based in research based efforts to promote positive youth development.

2. Suicide prevention professional development initiatives shall be included in County Professional Development Plans.
3. Specific professional development efforts in suicide prevention shall focus on providing information on identifying students at risk of suicide and referral protocols for appropriate services. This information shall include but not be limited to:
 - Warning signs that may indicate suicidal intentions, including changes in appearance, personality and/or behavior;
 - School and community resources and services related to suicide prevention; and
 - County/school crisis plan protocols for intervention/referral when a student attempts, threatens or discloses the desire to commit suicide. These county/school developed protocols should incorporate the American School Counselor Association's Ethical Standards pertaining to students who pose a "Danger to Self or Others":
 - a. Inform parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when a student poses a danger to self or others. This is to be done after careful deliberation and consultation with other counseling professionals.
 - b. Report risk assessments to parents when they underscore the need to act on behalf of a child at risk; never negate a risk of harm as students sometimes deceive in order to avoid further scrutiny and/or parental notification.
 - c. Understand the legal and ethical liability for releasing a student who is a danger to self or others.
4. Research-based suicide prevention professional development shall be provided under the direction of a county school system staff development coordinator and/or school counselor/psychologist representatives, in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies/providers and/or through similar consultant organizations.
5. Modes of delivery for suicide prevention professional development may include but should not be limited to face to face training, on-line training and/or material review.

Resources/Materials

The Center for Professional Development (CPD) will provide for the routine education of all professional educators and service personnel having direct contact with students on warning signs and resources to assist in suicide prevention through self review of resources and/or materials provided by the Jason Foundation.

In addition, suicide prevention professional development may be provided by county boards of education, Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA), the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR), the West Virginia Suicide Prevention Council, the Adolescent Suicide Prevention Education Network (ASPEN) and the Jason Foundation. County school systems are encouraged to develop partnerships with community mental health providers to assess local needs and resources regarding suicide prevention and design and deliver professional development accordingly.

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