




# School Mental Health Resources and Procedures

# LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

**“...changes to Education Law section 2801-a and 807 related to school emergency response planning, the New York State Education Department has provided additional resources to assist schools in complying with the legislative changes to emergency response planning requirements.”**

- Renee L. Rider, Assistant Commissioner Office of Student Support Services, New York State Education Department, August 12, 2016 Memo.

# SUPPORTING PACKET

- August 10, 2016 Mental Health Resources for Educators
  - January 18, 2017 Resources for Schools on Trauma-Informed Care and Youth Witnessing a Suicide
  - CSD Policies
    - Board Policy 5431, 5431E Suicide
    - Regulations 5431 Suicide
    - Board Policy 4320 School-wide pre-referral approaches and interventions
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# DISTRICT POLICY

## **5431 SUICIDE PREVENTION;**

Adolescent suicide is a major cause of death for teenagers. The Board of Education shall attempt to address the problem through intervention, prevention and education.

It is understood that most district employees do not have expertise either in the general area of mental health care nor the specific area of adolescent suicide. However, all school personnel and most specifically guidance counselors and teachers who work with students shall receive training to assist them to recognize general clues and give help once suicide appears as a possibility for a student known to them.

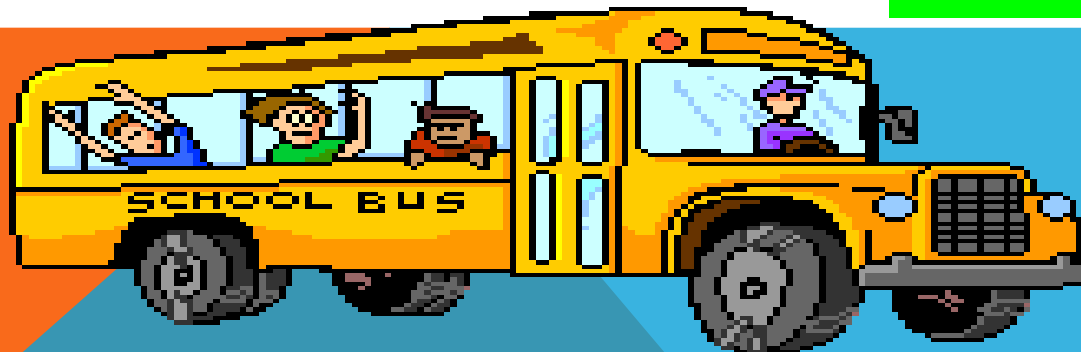
## **4320 SCHOOL-WIDE PRE-REFERRAL APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS;**

... Implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and support that reduce school and classroom behavioral problems, and creates and maintains a safe and positive learning environment by promoting positive behavior in all students.

# SCHOOL'S MENTAL HEALTH BEGINS WITH A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Does your school  
have a positive  
school climate?

How do you know?




# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?


- School connectedness refers to the belief by students that adults in school CARE about them
- When young people feel connected to their school it increases the likelihood of academic success (Blum and Libbey 2004)
- The sense of connectedness also reduces fighting, truancy and drop out rates (Blum and Libbey 2004)



# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Increased school connectedness is related to educational motivation, classroom engagement and lower rates of disruptive behavior. (Blum and Libbey 2004)
  - Students who feel connected experience less emotional distress (Wingspread Declaration on School Connections)
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# SCHOOL SUICIDE CONCERN

- Please review the document entitled “Mental Health Resources for Educators” included with this packet.
  - The district has a clear set of regulations included in this packet.
  - If you suspect a student may be at risk for suicide, the first step is to immediately contact the principal, the principal then contacts a school social worker, school counselor or psychologist.
  - School psychologist, counselor or social worker staff will provide immediate suicide screening and then determine next steps based on risk level.
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# RECIPE FOR POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Build real relationships with your students
- Listen attentively
- Try to give individual attention
- Use praise and warmth generously
- Be a mentor
- Look for a child's strengths and promote them

YOU can make a difference!



# REMEMBERING OUR MENTORS

- What adult member of your community or school helped you the most when you were a child? (teacher, coach, neighbor, etc)
- What were their characteristics? What about them and their personality helped you grow?
  - Staff/Teachers
  - Reflect



# CHILDREN WHO MAY NEED A REFERRAL FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING ASSISTANCE



- Children can have both internalizing or externalizing behaviors, that are concerning.

- Many children that are not a behavior problem may need emotional support from the school counselor or school social worker.

# INTERNALIZING BEHAVIORS

- Withdrawn
- Isolation
- Anxiety
- Depression/sad mood
- Somatic complaints (physical complaints)
- Poor appetite or over eating (severe weight gain or weight loss)
- Insomnia or hypersomnia (sleep disruptions)

# INTERNALIZING BEHAVIORS (CONTINUED)


- Diminished interest/pleasure in activities
- Fatigue/loss of energy nearly every day
- Diminished ability to think/concentrate
- Rejection by peers
- Extremely disorganization (as compared to peers)

# EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIORS


- Disrespectful
- Breaks rules
- Inattentive
- Aggressive
- Steals
- Frequent Temper outbursts
- Excessive stubbornness



# EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIORS (CONTINUED)


- Very fidgety – can't stay in seat when developmentally appropriate
  - Often interrupts or intrudes on others
  - Runs or climbs excessively when not appropriate
  - Does not seem willing or able to follow directions
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# CAN BE BOTH (EXTERNALIZING AND INTERNALIZING)

- School truancy
  - School refusal
  - Substance abuse
  - Self injurious behavior
  - Trauma reenactment
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## HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL FOR COUNSELING SERVICES

- Contact school counselor associate with that student
  - School counselor will make IST referral (if appropriate)
  - IST Team meets and determines what intervention (i.e., individual counseling, behavior plan, teacher consultation, etc.) will best meet the needs of the individual student
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# LOTS OF KIDS JUST NEED A HELPING HAND, OTHERS NEED MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT!

- Mental Illness in children does exist. It's a real disease, just like diabetes is!
- Children with mental illness are not choosing to be bad, their behavior signals their distress.
- A strong partnership between school and parents maximizes the child's ability to flourish. We are all on the same team!
- Remember, children who feel cared for in school *do better academically*, therefore their social emotional growth can not really be separated from school performance.

# TEAM PLAYERS WORKING TOGETHER

- Teachers and school staff have many responsibilities, often *too* many!
  - Many people help children with distress, most notably parents and sometimes other community agencies and professionals.
  - Teachers and school staff can help children with their behavior in school, on the school bus, and in the school yard. There is a science to it... (and increasing levels of punishment does not work)
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# BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE 101

## Important Behavioral Principles

- Establish a “baseline” (the behavioral norm for a student/child)
- Teach and model the desired behavior
- Reinforce the new behavior frequently but intermittently
- You may need to “shape” the new behavior




## IMPORTANT BEHAVIORAL PRINCIPLES:

- Provide far more attention for the new behavior than for the problem behavior
- Take another baseline to see if your reinforcement is working
- Consider ignoring the problem behavior



## IMPORTANT BEHAVIORAL PRINCIPALS:

- If you need to have a consequence for the problem behavior, have it be logical, administer with the least “fanfare” that you can, neutral tone of voice etc.
  - Keep time outs short, reintegrate child into activities and positive reinforcement as soon as possible.
  - Watch out for *inadvertent positive reinforcement* of the problem behavior !!!
    - ie: child throws tantrum in an attempt to avoid a particular tasks and this tantrum may work to avoid the task
    - This results in negatively reinforcing that behavior
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# WHEN TALKING TO PARENTS...WHAT NOT TO SAY!



**“Your child has ADHD.” (or any other diagnosis)**


**“Your child can not come back to school without medicine.” – THIS IS AGAINST THE LAW IN New York!**

# WHAT TO SAY

- Always include strengths and identify the problem behavior in objective and descriptive terms
- Give an example
- State a positive at the beginning and the end (make a sandwich)
  - “It’s great that Lori makes friends so easily *and* I am concerned that she is not staying on task during classroom activities. I also appreciate how willing she is to lead the clean up at the end of the day.
- Don’t minimize the problem behavior
  - It might not be getting better, or not everyone goes through a rough patch



# CHOOSE A RESPONSE AND NOT A REACTION

- Choose a response, prevent a reaction
  - Behavior is a consequence of feelings and needs. Address the feelings and needs or the behavior will not change
  - If you want respect, be respectful
  - Know that you can not force a child to behave
  - Keep your cool, stay in your “wise mind”
  - Be authoritative but not authoritarian
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# CHOOSE A RESPONSE AND NOT A REACTION

- Assist children in seeing the “future”, help them think through consequences short and long term
- Be calm and consistent
- If you are “losing your cool” double the distance between you and the child, and lower your voice
- Teach students what you want them to do, not what you *do not* want them to do
- Notice and praise appropriate behavior
- Affirm their strengths
- Call parents with good news!

# QUESTIONS?

