

Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force

Summary of meeting on Friday, June 29 in Topeka

Speakers/Resources Identified:

- Presentation from State Child Death Review Board, by Sara Hortenstine, Executive Director
- Presentation from Kansas Violent Death Reporting System, by Daina Zolck, KDHE
- Presentation from KDADS by Kimi Gardner, State Suicide Prevention Coordinator
- Presentation from KSDE, by Kent Reed, School Climate/Culture and Integration Specialist
- Presentation on current law and recent legislative action, by Lauren Mendoza, KLRD

Hurdles Identified:

- How can people who work directly with children receive better and timelier information about each child so that an arc of assistance can be better formed?
- Are we doing the arc of assistance correctly? Could it be improved? Should it be changed?
- What challenges does HIPAA present in getting services to youth in need? Does HIPAA prevent teachers and others who interact with youth in a significant way and who could be helpful from knowing of mental health challenges and diagnoses?

Recommendations:

- Better follow-up with families and friends after a death by suicide.
- Is there other information that law enforcement can collect at the time of a suicide death that may be helpful to family and friends going forward? Information that may help others better help the family and friends?
- Funding limitations for counselors, licensed social workers, and trained therapists in schools:
- Utilize current populations already in schools that could receive training and be willing and capable of stepping in, i.e., PTA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, parent who are already school volunteers
- Higher education institutions: How can these new teachers be better prepared and equipped to identify mental illness and suicidal thoughts and tendencies in youth?
- MOUs between each school district and CMHC to bring CMHC services into schools.
- Address mental health/youth suicide prevention with children at a younger age.
- Increase coordination and collaboration across and among state government entities that work with youth suicide.

Remaining Questions:

- Would greater understanding of the science behind mental illness lessen the shame surrounding a mental health diagnosis? (requesting future presentation to assist in answering)
- What does the Legislature look at regarding youth suicide? What does the Department of Education look at regarding youth suicide? What areas of responsibilities fall under each?
- Are there government, nonprofit, etc. programs that have been implemented in other states that have data proving that they have been effective? (will come with future presentations)
- How do students communicate? What is our most effective means of communicating with youth? (will come with future presentations)
- How can students address youth suicide prevention among themselves? (will come with future presentations)
- How do drugs and alcohol impact youth suicide?
- How is youth suicide currently treated in the media (i.e., 13 Reasons Why, Dear Evan Hanson); how can media be used to help reduce youth suicide?
- Usable, accurate, and comprehensive student survey data on mental health, bullying, suicidal thoughts, etc. Do we collect enough correct, helpful data?