

School and Community Strategies for Preventing Youth Suicide

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Challenging Times

- ▶ The leading causes of death for children are accidents, suicide, and homicide
- ▶ There is a national concern about school shootings
- ▶ Many parents have started foundations in memory of their child with different ideas about what needs to be done
- ▶ The majority of school shooters were suicidal and/or the victim of bullying
- ▶ It is the Screen Age and there are many concerns about the impact of technology on children

Youth Suicide Prevention: What Works?

- ▶ Reduce lethal means available to suicidal youth
- ▶ Interrupt the development of suicidal behaviors as a result of adverse childhood experiences
- ▶ Increase school and community connections
- ▶ Increase education about the warning signs of youth suicide especially for physicians
- ▶ Increase mental health care available to youth and improve the suicide assessment and management skills of professionals

Youth Suicide Promising Developments

- ▶ State legislation requiring suicide prevention in schools
- ▶ Increased communication and planning between schools and community and state resources
- ▶ Growing awareness of the contagious nature of youth suicide and the need for a well planned postvention
- ▶ Growing awareness of the need for continuing education training on suicide for mental health professionals and physicians
- ▶ Curriculum awareness and depression screening programs implemented for students in schools

Facts to Dispel Most Common Suicide Myths

- ▶ Suicide **rarely** occurs on a whim or without warning
- ▶ Suicide is **not** inherited or destined
- ▶ Talking about suicide **will not** plant the idea
- ▶ There **is** a relationship between bullying and suicide
- ▶ There **is** a relationship between suicide and self injury (NSSI)

Montana State School Plan by Scott and Donna Poland

- ▶ Montana CAST-S Crisis Action School Toolkit-Suicide (2017) available at:
www.namimt.org and
www.bigskyaacap.org and www.opi.mt.gov
- ▶ www.dphhs.mt.gov

Montana Challenges

- Many isolated communities and a shortage of in-patient treatment facilities and a shortage of psychiatrists
- Cultural acceptance of suicide & Montana always a top five state for suicide rate
- Guns are available in most homes and many are not properly stored
- Stigma associated with seeking treatment and concern about confidentiality
- Need for cultural and tradition specific information for Native Americans in MT.

CAST-S Montana

by Poland and Poland (2017)

- ▶ Sponsored by NAMI Montana and Big Sky Psychiatry Council
- ▶ Developed after years of our school experience and with valuable input from OPI, SAM, and the Montana DPHHS and many individuals
- ▶ Divided into three sections: Prevention, Intervention and Postvention
- ▶ Many tools and reusable forms are provided

CAST-S Montana by Poland and Poland (2017)

- ▶ Response to MT legislation HB 374 (2015) required OPI to provide guidance and training on suicide prevention and recommended school staff receive 2 hours of training every 5 years
- ▶ Response to HB 381 (2017) required schools to have procedures and plans related to suicide prevention and response

Barriers to Suicide Prevention in Schools

- ▶ Lack of awareness of the problem
- ▶ Lack of training and acceptance of any shared responsibility
- ▶ Schools have many competing demands
- ▶ Afraid to talk about suicide and ignore legislative requirements
- ▶ Failure to link with community services and prevention initiatives

Comprehensive Suicide Prevention in Schools

- Annual staff training on the warning signs for all who interact with students
- Suicide prevention information posted on the school district website and policies for prevention developed
- Lethality assessment training for key school personnel
- Referral procedures to secure needed community services for suicidal students
- Parent notification procedures when students are suspected to be suicidal
- Re-entry meetings after hospitalization and follow up at school for suicidal students
- Curriculum information on prevention for students

Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents

- ▶ Do not be afraid to talk to your child
- ▶ Know the risk factors and warning signs
- ▶ Act immediately to get help and do not minimize the signs of depression
- ▶ Turn to school and community mental health resources for help and know suicide is preventable
- ▶ Secure any guns in your home

Protective Factors

- ▶ Good relationships with other youth
- ▶ Seeks adult help when needed
- ▶ Lack of access to suicidal means
- ▶ Access to mental health care
- ▶ Religiosity
- ▶ School environment that encourages help seeking and promotes health

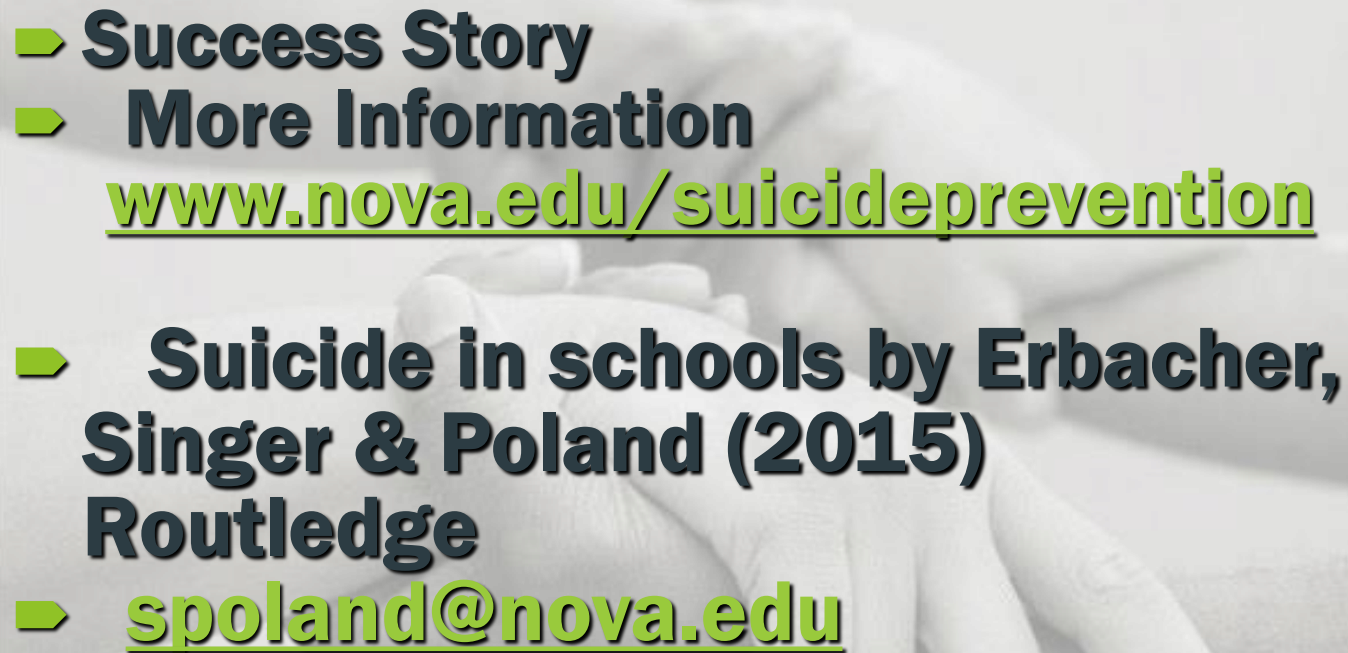
Protective Factors

- ▶ Family cohesion and stability
- ▶ Coping and problem solving skills
- ▶ Positive self worth and impulse control
- ▶ Positive connections to school and extracurricular participation
- ▶ Successful academically

Recognize that All Children Need:

- ▶ Three or more significant adults in their lives in addition to parents
- ▶ A sense of safety and belonging in the home, school, and community
- ▶ Three or more hours of organized activities weekly
- ▶ Volunteer work (adolescents)

Suicide Prevention Is Everyone's Responsibility

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- **Success Story**
 - **More Information**
www.nova.edu/suicideprevention
 - **Suicide in schools by Erbacher,
Singer & Poland (2015)**
Routledge
 - spoland@nova.edu

YOUTH SUICIDE: Resources

American Association of Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide
Prevention

www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

www.sprc.org

Montana DPHHS

[http://dphhs.mt.gov/suicideprevention/
suicideresources](http://dphhs.mt.gov/suicideprevention/suicideresources)