

# Youth Suicide Prevention in Wisconsin Schools

1

## A 3-Tiered Prevention and Intervention Model

Brenda Jennings, MSE  
Education Consultant, Suicide Prevention  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Gail Anderson  
Brodhead School District

Revised May 2011



# What are the statistics for WI?

2

From 2000-2008 (9 years)	Deaths among Youth age 5-19
Motor Vehicle Accidents	1,124
All Cancers	290
Homicide (Assault)	284
Accidental Drowning	107
Smoke Inhalation/Fire	37
Accidental Firearm	27
Undetermined Firearm	7

**Suicide: 420**



# Local/County Data

3

- Consider YRBS data
- Other local surveys
- Anecdotal data
  - Those seeking services
  - Attempts
  - Completions in students
- Consider students, staff, families, community
- Get your county data



# Online YRBS

4

- Gather student self-reported data on health behaviors, attitudes and perceptions.
- Raise awareness of important health issues.
- Monitor the impact of prevention programs.
- Over 200 WI school districts have successfully used the OYRBS.
- Contact Brian Weaver (608) 266-7921



# WI Law—we need to meet...

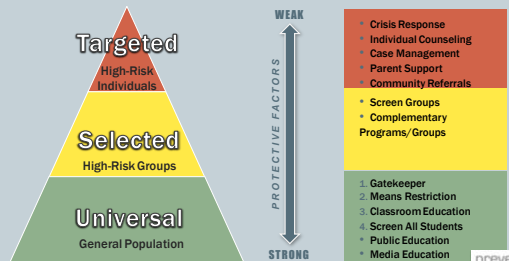
5

- See **bold** sections on the handout, “WI Youth Suicide Prevention Laws...”
- Help you meet your legal requirements
  - Educate youth in suicide prevention
  - Curriculum must be part of Health Instruction
  - Model notice: suicide prevention resources (Handout)
- Meet DPI’s legal requirements
  - Training and TA for school-based prevention



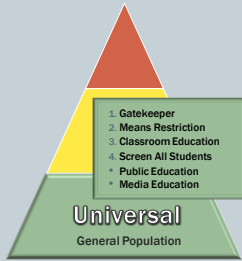
# Prevention Framework

6



## Universal Prevention

7



prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Strategy 1: Adult Gatekeeper Training

8

Systematic training for all adults who interact daily with students

- Basic statistics about youth suicide
- Warning signs of suicide
- How to respond: ACT
- Referral to crisis response team
- Can be provided in a short inservice

prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Gatekeeper Training Efficacy

9

- Empowers people to help
- Can end fear of asking—paralysis
- ↑ capacity to identify, support, and refer at-risk and high-risk youth
- 1 year after training, 1 in 7 staff asked had about a student's suicidal intent

• Wyman, 2008, cited previously

prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Resources for Gatekeeper Training

10

- QPR Training for staff
- From Yellow Ribbon:
  - Ask 4 Help! for students
  - Be A Link! 2-hour adult gatekeeper
- DPI's Gatekeeper is on-line webcast: go to DPI's suicide prevention page for link
- Contact MHA WI & HOPES for trainers

prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Strategy 2: Lethal Means Restriction

11

- Critical times to talk with parents about means restriction, especially firearms:
  - Any time there has been ideation
  - When starting or changing antidepressants
  - Any time there has been an attempt
  - Upon return to school from psychiatric hospitalization
- Harvard Injury Control Research Center:  
[www.meansmatter.org](http://www.meansmatter.org)

prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Four practices each protect

12

- trigger locks/cabinets
- store unloaded
- lock ammo
- separate locations for guns and ammo

• Grossman, JAMA 2/9/05

prevent  
suicide  
WISCONSIN  
STATEWIDE LEADER  
IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Strategy 3: Classroom Education

13

- State mandate for schools
- Two to six class periods, discussions, and/or skills training effectively reduce suicide attempts
- School health **and** pupil services
- Coordinate with public education efforts



## Classroom Curriculum: SOS

14

- SOS, Signs of Suicide, is source of ACT
- Middle School materials complement HS
- Strong evidence base
- DPI Curriculum uses their video
- Materials for students, parents and staff
- Screening forms
- Enough materials for 300 students, \$350
- Each CESA has at least one MS and one HS kit



## Lifelines ASAP

15

- Four 45-minute lessons
- Information and attitudes about suicide, help seeking, and school resources;
- A discussion of warning signs of suicide and role-playing exercises for students who may encounter a suicidal peer
- Videos: appropriate and inappropriate responses to a suicidal peer, an actual response
- Model policies and procedures
- Presentations for educators and parents
- Now available from Hazelden, \$225



## Classroom Instruction for Elementary

16

- Positive Behavior Supports to teach social skills and problem-solving and improve climate
- Use DPI's Bully Prevention Curriculum
- Look at CASEL
- One study showed kids who were taught "The Good Behavior Game" in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades had HALF the rates of suicidal ideation and attempts (n=178) at ages 19-21!

• Wilcox, et al. "Effects of a Universal Classroom Behavior Program in First and Second Grades on Young Adult Outcomes." *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 95, Supplement 1, 1 June 2008, Pages S60-S73



## DPI Unit of Instruction

17

- What is Your Depression/Suicide IQ?
- SOS – It's Time to ACT - Video
- Phone Booths: Scripts Related to Suicide Warning Signs
- Lights! Camera! Action!
- Apples to Apples
- The Crisis Card



## Strategy 4: Universal Screening

18

### Screening is Systematic & Proactive

- May target all students in the school or in one or more grades or classes
- Best practice is to integrate with existing classes
- **MUST** have necessary community-based referral network in place



## Screening Efficacy

19

- Annual (or more) screening for suicide risk is one of the best ways to identify youth at-risk for suicide
- Periodic screening of at-risk groups & high-risk individuals significantly enhances suicide prevention efforts
- **“No Evidence of Iatrogenic Effects of Screening”**

• Gould, et al., JAMA, 2005; 293:1635-1643



## Evidence-based Screening Programs

20

S.O.S. – Signs of Suicide has a screening component that includes depression and AODA issues and an educational component

<http://mentalhealthscreening.org/>

TeenScreen – Screening tool that includes all mental health issues, computer-based with follow-up interview

<http://www.teenscreen.org/>



## Strategy 5: Public Education

21

Raises awareness of the issue, using printed materials and PSAs re:

- Suicide risk & protective factors
- Warning signs of suicide potential
- For free PSAs, see “Teen Suicide Prevention Campaign” at [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- Also, see/order “Free Suicide Lifeline Materials” like squishy balls, posters, pens, pads at [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- Prevent Suicide Wisconsin at [www.preventsuicidewi.org](http://www.preventsuicidewi.org)



### Help Prevent Suicide

Promotional Materials Available from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK

You can play a valuable role in helping to reduce suicide by promoting the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK. To request one, the Lifeline has developed a full suite of materials, available free of charge, to help raise awareness about the Lifeline. Please see the reverse side of this form for information on how to order the materials from the National Mental Health Information Center. These materials are also available in Spanish and accessible formats on our Web site, [www.nationalmentalhealthinformationcenter.org](http://www.nationalmentalhealthinformationcenter.org). For help with these materials, contact the Lifeline Communications Team at 1-800-799-5447 or [lifeline@nashua.nimh.gov](mailto:lifeline@nashua.nimh.gov).

**Lifeline Contact Card**  
Designed for general use and can be used for personal identification.

**Wallet Card for Consumers**  
With risk assessment tips for consumers and other professionals.

**Wallet Card for Consumers**  
With risk assessment tips. Available in both English and Spanish.

**Wallet Card for Copying With Identifier**  
Includes several health warning signs. Available in both English and Spanish.

**Lifeline Pens and Writing Pads**  
Pens and writing pads bearing the Lifeline logo and number.

**Brochure for Consumers**  
Provides an overview of the Lifeline and includes the national hotline number.

**Lifeline Stress Ball**  
Designed to look like a basketball, this squishy stress ball features the Lifeline logo and number.

**After an Abusive Breakup**  
Available for group sessions, lectures, and individual case providers. Spanish version of the brochure for women and children are also available.

**Lifeline Posters**  
Five different posters designed to reach ages 25-54, age 15+, and American Indian/Alaska Natives. Regular posters provide the Lifeline number to those in crisis. Spanish versions of the posters 15-24 are available. The posters can also be ordered.

**Complete order form on reverse to fax or mail**

22

## Strategy 6: Media Reporting

23

Reduce contagion. Highest impact with:

- Details about method
- Photographs, drama, headlines
- Oversimplification: no mental illness
- Consider link to bullying
- See 2-page fact sheet “Safe Reporting Guidelines” on CD and at [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

• Hawton & Williams, “Editorial: Influences of the media on suicide,” *British Medical Journal*, 2002; 325: 1374-1375



## Selected Prevention/Intervention

24

**Strengths**

- More focused
- May prevent onset of risk behaviors

**And Challenges**

- Youth rarely seek help themselves, but adults think they will
- Teachers unprepared to recognize & refer

**Who is High Risk?**

- American Indian
- White Males
- EBD/SED
- GLBTQ
- Dropouts
- Victims of abuse
- Aggressive
- Perfectionist
- High-Achievers
- Exposure via family or friends



## Strategy 7: Screening Small Groups

25

- Targets high risk group(s)
- Use after specific events or 1-2 times per year
- May be integrated into existing student activities: SPED, Health, Alt. Ed., GLBTQ
- Same screening instruments



## Preparatory Steps for Screening

26

1. Pupil services commitment
2. Approval by administration & school board
3. Identify community resources appropriate for students
4. Active Consent – allow opt out
5. Select valid & reliable instruments
6. Teacher in-service & parent meeting
7. Link to other activities



## Strategy 8: Complementary Programs

27

### Systematic plan to build skills

- Reduce suicide risk factors
- Pupil Services and others using:
  - Violence Prevention: Think First
  - Problem-Solving: Think Good/Feel Good
  - Coping: Taking Action—Depressed Youth
  - Conflict Resolution: Stop & Think
- See [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org) for more



## Bullying Prevention

28

- Prevent & intervene in bullying
  - Victims
  - Bullies
- Model policy - prevent & intervene in bullying  
<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/bullyingguide.pdf>
- DPI curricula  
[http://www.dpi.wi.gov/pubsales/pplsvc\\_2.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/pubsales/pplsvc_2.html)
- Webcast  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjc7Osf-RL8&feature=channel>



## Targeted Prevention/Intervention

29



### Strengths and Challenges

- Target high-risk individuals
- Aimed at specific risk & protective factors
- Stem progression of suicide potential
- Benefits outweigh risks
- Previous attempts = focused help
- High-risk youth more vulnerable fewer protective factors
- Failure to address specific risk & protective factors ↑ their suicide potential



## Strategy 9: Crisis Response

30

### Part 1: Student at risk for suicide

### Part 2: Suicide attempt

### Part 3: Completed suicide

- in the media
- community member
- parent
- school staff
- student



## Crisis Response Plan

31

A school-based plan to respond to student/staff suicidal behaviors

- District-wide crisis response plan is required under federal law (SADFS)
- Perform regular preparedness checks
- Plan for collaboration with local community resources, and other districts if needed



## Research has shown that:

32

- "...public eulogies, flying flags at half-mast, and erecting permanent public memorials... may contribute to suicide contagion by suggesting to susceptible persons that society is honoring the suicidal behavior of the deceased person, rather than mourning the person's death."

• CDC, MMWR, Recommendations and Reports, April 22, 1994 / 43(RR-6):9-18



## Confidentiality

33

- State law [118.125(2)] requires school boards to adopt regulations to maintain the confidentiality of pupil records.
- References to a student's need for mental health treatment are generally considered to be patient health care records.
- Educators in schools may access pupil records, including patient health care records, only if they have legitimate educational interests in the information.



## Confidentiality

34

- Unauthorized re-disclosure, including gossiping with people within or outside the school system, is illegal.
- Further, individuals may be fined for unauthorized disclosure of patient health care records, even if it is inadvertent or unintentional.



## Strategy 10: Individual Counseling

35

- ↑ individual repertoire of health-promoting coping skills
- ↑ decision-making, interpersonal communication, & drug use control skills
- ↑ self-management skills for depression, hopelessness & anxiety
- ↑ skills in setting goals & monitoring
- ↑ skills in seeking support to extend social networks



## School's Role in Depression Rx

36

- Coordinate by:
  - Monitoring medications
  - Sharing information
  - Keeping confidentiality
  - Providing appropriate interventions and close case management



## Strategy 11: Case Management

37

Systematic process to follow identified high-risk youth: create support networks

- Assess level of risk, especially in association with critical incidents
- Extend the social network of high-risk youth to connect them to caring adults



## Strategy 12: Parent Support

38

Parents can minimize/paralyze too!

Parents need support & training to be “partners” in the intervention

- Positive reinforcement to youth for acquired skills & behavior changes
- Time allocated to discuss concerns & share in youth’s progress



## Strategy 13: Community Referrals

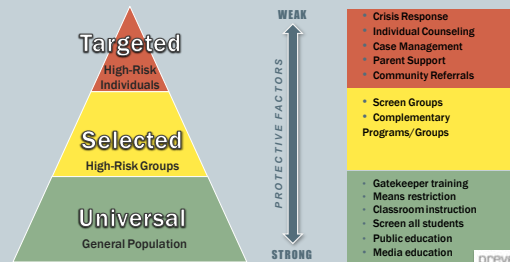
39

- Local mental health treatment resources appropriate for teens
- County, HMO, clergy, etc.
- Local crisis services to provide suicidal youth with immediate access to help
- Law enforcement for immediate intervention
- State & national resources



## Prevention Framework

40



## National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

41



## More Resources

42

- SPRC – Suicide Prevention Resource Center <http://www.sprc.org/>
- AAS – American Association of Suicidology <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/home>
- HOPES – Helping Other Prevent & Educate about Suicide <http://hopes-wi.org>
- NREPP – National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices [www.nrepp.samhsa.gov](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov)



## Contact information

43

Brenda Jennings, MSE  
Department of Public Instruction  
PO Box 7841  
Madison, WI 53707  
(608)266-7051  
[brenda.jennings@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:brenda.jennings@dpi.wi.gov)

Gail Anderson  
Brodhead School District  
608-897-2141, ext. 178  
[ganderson@brodhead.k12.wi.us](mailto:ganderson@brodhead.k12.wi.us)

