



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

September 3, 2021

The Honorable Larry Hogan
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Report required by Education Article §7-505 and §7-506 (MSAR #540)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

This letter is intended to fulfill the reporting summary required by Sections 7-505 and 7-506 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 1986. Sections 7-501 through 7-504 require schools to establish youth suicide prevention programs that include staff development, classroom programs of instruction, and crisis intervention. Sections 7-505 and 7-506 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to allocate funds to local school systems (LSSs) that submit proposals pursuant to certain criteria and to submit a summary of the LSS reports to the Governor and the General Assembly.

As currently written, Section 7-506(c) of the statute states that the Governor shall include funds in the budget designated for the Youth Suicide Prevention Program. From 1986 to 2006, funds were distributed through the MSDE to LSSs to support youth suicide prevention programming in schools. Additionally, Section 7-505(b)(4) directs the MSDE to seek federal funds available under the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Behavioral Health Administration, now manages these federal funds. For the 2021-2022 school year, funding from the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance STOP School Violence grant is being used to support professional development and training for LSS staff in Trauma-Informed Care and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) using the ACE Interface Master Training program. Funding from this grant is also being used to provide professional development and training in the Question, Persuade, and Referral (QPR) program that is designed to prevent youth suicide.

The MSDE has continually supported the development of youth prevention programs within LSSs since the passage of Sections 7-501 through 7-504 authorizing schools to establish youth suicide prevention programs of support that include staff development, classroom programs of instruction, crisis intervention, and other related policies and procedures. This initiative is being accomplished through collaboration and partnerships with the MDH and various community agencies. These programs have become an integral component of school-wide and system-wide planning.

As a result of Sections 7-501 through 7-504, youth suicide prevention curriculum is now taught as a part of the comprehensive health program in public schools. In addition, on July 24, 2018, the State Board of Education granted permission to adopt COMAR 13A.07.11 Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training, which requires each LSS to

The Honorable Larry Hogan
The Honorable Bill Ferguson
The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
September 3, 2021
Page 2

provide annual training to all certificated school staff to: (1) understand and respond to youth suicide risk; (2) identify professional resources to help students in crisis. Effective July 1, 2021 that same legislation was updated to include (3) recognize student behavioral health issues; (4) recognize students experiencing trauma or violence out of school and refer student to behavioral health services; and (5) if the school is a community school, support students needing the services at a community school.

Beginning in school year 2021-2022, the MSDE will be managing a three-year mental health project that will address the clinical and emergency needs of students returning to school after COVID-19. This project will provide additional clinical staff to schools by region on an as needed basis. Staff may include a school psychologist, a licensed clinical professional counselor, a licensed certified clinical social worker, a school nurse, family navigator, substance use counselor, certified behavioral specialist, and clinical oversight provided by a clinical psychiatrist. Additionally, funding was provided for the expansion of Youth Mental Health First Aid, ACE Interface program, QPR, and Restorative Approaches. As part of the expansion of this program, several partnerships are being explored with institutions of higher education to provide stipends for certification in school-based mental health fields.

The MSDE sponsors an annual suicide prevention professional development activity attended by all local suicide prevention points of contact. All LSSs have a designated point of contact that facilitates the implementation of the suicide prevention program. The 24 LSSs and the SEED School of Maryland continue to annually develop and implement youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies. Many LSSs utilize evidence-based programs to provide gatekeeper trainings to school staff and students. Evidence-based programs include Yellow Ribbon; Signs of Suicide; ASSIST K-12; Self Talk; Youth Mental Health First Aid; behavior threat assessment; and mental health services. All services will be available through Maryland's School Based Health Centers.

Suicide prevention continues to be a topic at administrative meetings for local Directors of Student Services, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, and school safety supervisors. The professional development emphasizes and disseminates best practices, resources, identification of programs, and implementation strategies. Professional development also highlights available resources to assist students in crisis in LSSs across the State. Staff at the MSDE, are assigned to assist youth suicide prevention initiatives in schools and serve as members of the statewide Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention. The MSDE intends to continue these efforts.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Mary L. Gable, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy by phone at (410) 767-0275 or by email at mary.gable@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

c: Sarah Albert