



Mohammed Choudhury  
State Superintendent of Schools

October 1, 2022

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

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

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
House Speaker  
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 education agencies (LEAs) that submit proposals pursuant to certain criteria and to submit a summary of the LEA 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 LEAs 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.

The MSDE has continually supported the development of youth prevention programs within LEAs 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 LEA to provide annual training to all certificated school staff to: (1) understand and

respond to youth suicide risk and (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.

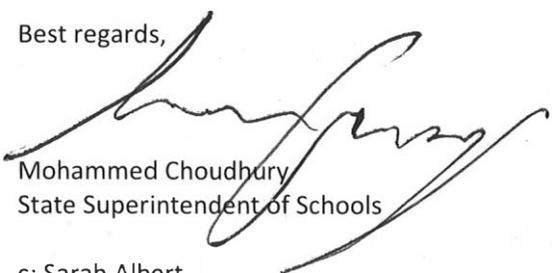
In the fall 2022, the MSDE developed the Maryland School Mental Health Response Program (MD-SMHRP) to provide timely consultation and support to LEAs to address student and staff mental health concerns. The program will enrich and enhance, but not replace, the work of site-based student support services personnel. MD-SMHRP staff include a licensed professional counselor, licensed certified clinical social workers, a school nurse, system navigators, a substance use counselor, a behavioral specialist, and clinical consultation provided by a clinical child psychiatrist. The team also includes staff from the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine that are available to provide training and technical assistance. Additionally, there will be an expansion of supports related to youth mental health first aid, trauma informed practices, and restorative approaches.

Currently, the MSDE also sponsors an annual suicide prevention professional development activity attended by all local suicide prevention points of contact. All LEAs have a designated point of contact that facilitates the implementation of the suicide prevention program. The 24 LEAs and the SEED School of Maryland continue to annually develop and implement youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies. Many LEAs 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, behavioral threat assessment, and mental health services.

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 LEAs 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](mailto:mary.gable@maryland.gov).

Best regards,



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State Superintendent of Schools

c: Sarah Albert