



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION




Michael Sentance  
State Superintendent of Education

September 16, 2016

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City and County Superintendents of Education

**FROM:** Michael Sentance   
State Superintendent of Education

**RE:** The *Jason Flatt Act*: Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Model Policy

In response to the *Jason Flatt Act* (Act #2016-310), the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Prevention and Support Services Section, and the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee have developed the attached Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Model Policy for local education agencies (LEAs) to use in the development of their local board policy. The Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee is a collaboration of the ALSDE and other organizations as directed under the *Jason Flatt Act* to include, but not limited to, the School Superintendents of Alabama, the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, the Alabama Education Association, the Alabama Association of School Boards, the Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation, and other pertinent mental health and suicide prevention organizations.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure that **ALL** Alabama students in Grades K-12 are provided with the curriculum and resources necessary to participate in programs in an effort to prevent student suicide. To support LEAs in this effort, the ALSDE and the Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee will be providing information on resources for staff training and curriculum for students to assist school systems/schools as they develop practices and procedures in support of your policy.

If you have any further questions, you may contact Dr. Erica Butler or Dr. Marilyn Lewis, Prevention and Support Services Section, by telephone at 334-242-8165 or by e-mail at [ebutler@alsde.edu](mailto:ebutler@alsde.edu) or [mlewis@alsde.edu](mailto:mlewis@alsde.edu).

MS/EB/CT

Attachments

FY16-2087

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**THE JASON FLATT ACT**  
**State of Alabama**  
**SB11**  
**Youth Suicide Awareness & Prevention**  
**Enacted May 5, 2016**  
**Model Policy on Alabama's Jason Flatt Act**

**Introduction**

Suicide is the tenth cause of death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, the cause of death rankings are 2nd and 3rd in the nation, and these rankings are higher for youth in the same age brackets in the state of Alabama. The *Jason Flatt Act* was passed in order to equip education institutions and their personnel to recognize and act on signs of suicide risk in order to provide prevention, intervention and postvention with students at risk, their families and the communities who may be affected.

The *Jason Flatt Act*, which amends the 16-28B-8 of the Code of Alabama 1975, includes several elements listed below (*in italics*) which should be interpreted as Policy. "To the extent that the legislature shall appropriate funds, or to the extent that any local board may provide funds from other sources, each school system shall implement the following standards and policies for programs in an effort to prevent student suicide":

**Section 1. Prevention of Suicide**

The *Jason Flatt Act* was passed in order to equip Alabama school districts and their personnel to recognize and act on signs of suicide risk in order to provide prevention, intervention and postvention with students at risk, their families and the communities who may be affected. This act, which amends 16-28B-8 of the *Code of Alabama 1975*, includes prevention of harassment and violence.

**Section 2.** The *Jason Flatt Act* includes several elements which should be interpreted as Policy. School systems will:

- (1) *Foster individual, family, and group counseling services related to suicide prevention.*
- (2) *Make referral, crisis intervention, and other related information available for students, parents, and school personnel.*
- (3) *Foster training for school personnel who are responsible for counseling and supervising students.*
- (4) *Increase student awareness of the relationship between drug and alcohol use and suicide.*
- (5) *Educate students in recognizing signs of suicidal tendencies and other facts and warning signs of suicide.*
- (6) *Inform students of available community suicide prevention services.*
- (7) *Promote cooperative efforts between school personnel and community suicide prevention program personnel.*
- (8) *Foster school-based or community-based, or both, alternative programs outside of the classroom.*
- (9) *Develop a strategy to assist survivors of attempted suicide, students, and school personnel in coping with the issues relating to attempted suicide, suicide, the death of a student, and healing.*

*(10) Engage in any other program or activity which the local board determines is appropriate and prudent in the efforts of the school system to prevent student suicide.*

*(11) Provide training for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students on the local board policies to prevent harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence.*

*(12) Develop a process for discussing with students local board policies relating to the prevention of student suicide and to the prevention of harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence.*

*(13) Provide annual training for all certificated school employees in suicide awareness and prevention. This training may be provided within the framework of existing inservice training programs or as a part of required professional development offered by the local school system.*

### **Section 3. Description of Behavior Expected of Students**

Students are expected to treat other students with courtesy, respect, and dignity and comply with the Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected and required to (1) comply with the requirements of the law, policy, regulation, and rules prohibiting harassment, violence, or intimidation and (2) to comply with the system's prevention strategies related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention support.

### **Section 4. Responsibility of Reporting**

Any person involved in a cause of action or omission resulting from the implementation of this suicide prevention policy or resulting from any training, or lack thereof, required by this section, shall be subject to state immunity law.

### **Section 5. Promulgation of Policy and Related Procedures, Rules and Forms**

This policy and any procedures and rules developed and approved to implement the policy will be published, disseminated, and made available to students, parents and legal guardians, and employees by such means and methods as are customarily used for such purposes, including publication on the (local board's) Web site.

**Alabama State Department of Education  
Prevention and Support Services  
Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee  
August 1-2, 2016**

Ms. Allison Faircloth  
Chairperson Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee  
Executive Director  
Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation

Dr. David Coombs  
Professor  
University of Alabama Birmingham

Mrs. Wanda Langley  
Counseling and Guidance  
Alabama State Department of Education

Dr. Judith Harrington  
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Injury Prevention Programs Manager  
Alabama Department of Public Health

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Ms. Janet Shaw Gabel  
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