



**Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy**

**Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training**

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Reference: Md. Educ. Art. § 2-205.6-122

COMAR 13A.07.11—*Student Suicide Prevention and Safety Training*

**Background**

In 2018, the Maryland General Assembly enacted House Bill 920 (Chapter 335) which required certificated school personnel (except as provided in §6-704.1 See supplementary information COMAR 13A.12.03.02) who have direct contact with students on a regular basis to complete training on or before December 1 each year in the skills required to: (1) understand and respond to youth suicide risk; (2) understand and respond to student mental health, student trauma, student safety and other topics related to student social and emotional well-being; and (3) identify professional resources to help students in crisis. In July 2018, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted COMAR 13A.07.11 to support House Bill 920.

Below are some the responses to commonly asked questions regarding COMAR 13A.07.11.

**Who are the certificated school staff affected by COMAR 13A.07.11?**

Certificated school personnel refers to individuals who hold a certificate from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in early childhood education; elementary education; middle school education; general secondary content areas; special education; specialty areas, such as art, dance, English for Speakers of Other Languages, environmental education, health; administrative or supervisory areas; specialist areas; and student support personnel. These are also individuals who have direct contact with students on a regular basis.

**What are the requirements of the local school systems for COMAR 13A.07.11?**

Schools are required to provide annual training during an in-service program or a professional development requirement that may be met during the time designated for professional development. The method for training is to be determined by the local school system. In addition, each local superintendent must submit documentation annually to the State Superintendent by school on the type of training, the number of certificated school personnel trained, the dates of the training, and the materials used for training.

**What is *Duty of Care*?**

**Duty of Care** is a phrase that refers to a legal obligation imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others. It is the first element that must be established to proceed with an action in negligence.

***There is no duty of care imposed on certificated personnel who complete the training required under COMAR 13A.07.1.*** The wording of the regulation states the following:

The training requirement **may not** be construed to impose a duty of care on certificated school personnel who complete the training:

- Unless the acts or omissions of a certificated school employee who completed the training are willful, wanton or grossly negligent, a person may not bring an action against a county board for personal injury or wrongful death caused by an act or omission resulting from:
  - Any training or lack of training of the covered certificated school personnel; or
  - The implementation of the training.

### **How does COMAR 13A.07.11 impact *Duty to Warn*?**

**Duty to Warn** refers to the responsibility of a counselor or therapist to inform third parties or authorities if a client (e.g., student) poses a threat to himself or herself or another identifiable individual. It is one of just a few instances where a therapist can breach client confidentiality. The training should include a clear message which states that school personnel who have a Duty to Warn as part of their professional role (i.e., school counselors and school psychologists) are still held to that standard.

### **What should schools do to prepare staff for training?**

All certified school personnel (See Md. Educ. Art §6-704.1 COMAR 13A.12.03.02 for exemption language for school counselors) must receive suicide prevention training in the skills needed to understand and respond to youth suicide risk and to be able to identify professional resources to help students in crisis. A question has arisen related to staff for whom the training might be an emotional trigger due to death of a loved one from a suicide. As in all cases with sensitive training topics (i.e., suicide, child abuse, active shooters, etc.), trainers should be sensitive to the fact that such participants may be in attendance. As a result, the MSDE recommends a short statement like this at the beginning of the training:

"This training is designed to provide information about the skills needed to understand and respond to youth suicide risk. At any time during the training, should you have a personal and emotional reaction due to the loss of a loved one due to suicide, please allow yourself to quietly leave the room. Our school counselors and school psychologists are aware of the training today and are here to help you if you should need them. "

Alternative methods of sharing the required information should be pursued by means of one-on-one training with the school counselor or school psychologist or other means determined by the school or school system.

### **Is there a specific content to be used for training?**

Content for training should be evidence-based and research informed. There is no particular program or practice that needs to be used. A one-hour overview provided by qualified staff, such as school counselors and/or school psychologists, can meet the requirement for the regulation. The

MSDE has published a compilation of programs used by local school systems in the *Resource Guide of Maryland School Mental Health and Wellness ( 2017)* that is available at the following link:

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Suicide/ResourceGuideMDSuicidePreventionPrograms.pdf>

This guide can be used to help identify programs and practices to assist in developing content or strategies for training.

### **Are there best practices for suicide prevention training for school staff?**

Research indicates that mental health is associated with a variety of health risks. The 2016 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey provided data that supports the need for suicide prevention training for all school staff, regardless of role. A list of best practices appears below. The list of best practices provided is not all-inclusive and is not intended as an endorsement. The implementation of evidence-based equitable systems of support is encouraged.

### **What Team-Based approaches are recommended?**

Collaborate and consult with the school's Student Support Team (SST) or other school team for content and to clarify referral procedures and processes for students in crisis. These teams typically consist of principals, teachers, school counselors, early childhood specialists, behavior specialists, pupil personnel workers, school nurses, and school psychologists. The school system's Department of Student Services is also a critical partner in the development and dissemination of this training content. These staff can use data and problem-solving skills to help identify students in need of additional behavioral supports and to provide such supports.

### **How can we implement Multi-Tiered System of Support?**

The implementation of a multi-tiered system of support for academic and behavioral concerns is an essential best practice for implementing a framework of support for students. Examples include Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Integrated Tiered System of Supports, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS), or Social Emotional Education. These frameworks emphasize an educational approach to address student risk behaviors and social-emotional needs.

### **How might we effectively communicate with community-based providers?**

Many school systems and schools have formed partnerships with community-based providers to support the emotional and psychological needs of students in their buildings. These partners should be aware of the training being provided so that they can follow the identified protocols and procedures for students in crisis. These providers may also be able to assist in identifying appropriate community supports for students who require additional support.

### **How might we effectively communicate with parents?**

Parents/guardians of students should also be aware of the training. The Parent Teacher Association

(PTA) and other parent-based groups should be made aware of the training and its importance. It may be helpful to also make parents/guardians aware of local resources that can be used to assist students and families in crisis.

### **How do we select locally based resources?**

Resources that are provided to staff as part of the training should include local resources that provide assistance to families and students at a free or minimal cost. These resources should be approved by the school system and all communication with community providers to access resources and supports for students should be appropriately communicated.

### **Additional Sources**

Maryland Suicide and Crisis Hotlines

<http://suicidehotlines.com/maryland.html>

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

Save A Friend: Tips for Teens to Prevent Suicide <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/save-a-friend-tips-for-teens-to-prevent-suicide>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (evidence-based programs) <http://www.sprc.org/strategic-planning/finding-programs-practices>

### **Contacts**

For questions regarding suicide prevention training requirements, contact:

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**Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy**

**Student Suicide Prevention Training Supplementary Information  
Md. Educ. Art §6-704.1 COMAR 13A.12.03.02  
Comparison of COMAR 13A.12.03 and 13A.07.11**

**Background for COMAR 13A.12.03.02**

In 2015, Maryland Education Article §6-704.1 (also known as “Lauryn’s law”) required a certificate holder applying for renewal of a certificate as a school counselor to obtain training in the knowledge and skills required to understand and respond to social, emotional and personal development of students, including the knowledge and skills relating to: the recognition of indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress, including depression, trauma, violence, youth suicide, and substance abuse; and the identification of professional resources to help students in crisis. This regulation refers to School Counselors who are certified by the Maryland State Department of Education.

**What are the requirements of the local school systems for COMAR 13A.12.03.02?**

Individual professionals are responsible for obtaining the continuing professional development credits (CPDs) and graduate-level coursework required to maintain certification under 13A.12.03.02.

**Comparison of COMAR 13A.07.11 and COMAR 13A.12.03.02**

Law/Regulation	Who Does it Affect?	What Does it Affect?	What is Required?
Chapter 467/ HB 947 2015 COMAR13A.12.03.02  Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board - School Counselors - Certification Renewal Requirement (Laurn's Law)	School Counselors <b>ONLY</b>	Certification and Re-Certification for school counselors	<b>One semester hour</b> of specified course work to recognize and address indicators of mental illness and behavioral distress, including depression, trauma, violence, youth suicide, and substance abuse and professional resources to help students in crisis.
Law/Regulation	Who Does it Affect?	What Does it Affect?	What is Required?
Chapter 335/House Bill 920 2017 COMAR 13.A.07.11  Primary and Secondary Education-Certificated School Personnel-Training Requirement	All Certified School Personnel-except school counselors  Certified school personnel includes an individual who holds a certificate from the Maryland State Department of Education	Training only	<b>Training on or before December 1 of each year</b> in skills needed to understand and respond to youth suicide risk. Other supplemental content areas include student mental health, student trauma, student safety, and student social and emotional well-being.