

# MTSS for Suicide Prevention

2024 Conference on Advancing  
School Mental Health

Orlando, FL

Julie Goldstein Grumet, PhD  
Richard Fournier, Ed.D

December 6, 2024



# Meet Our Facilitators



Richard Fournier, EdD  
*Director of Education & Wellbeing*

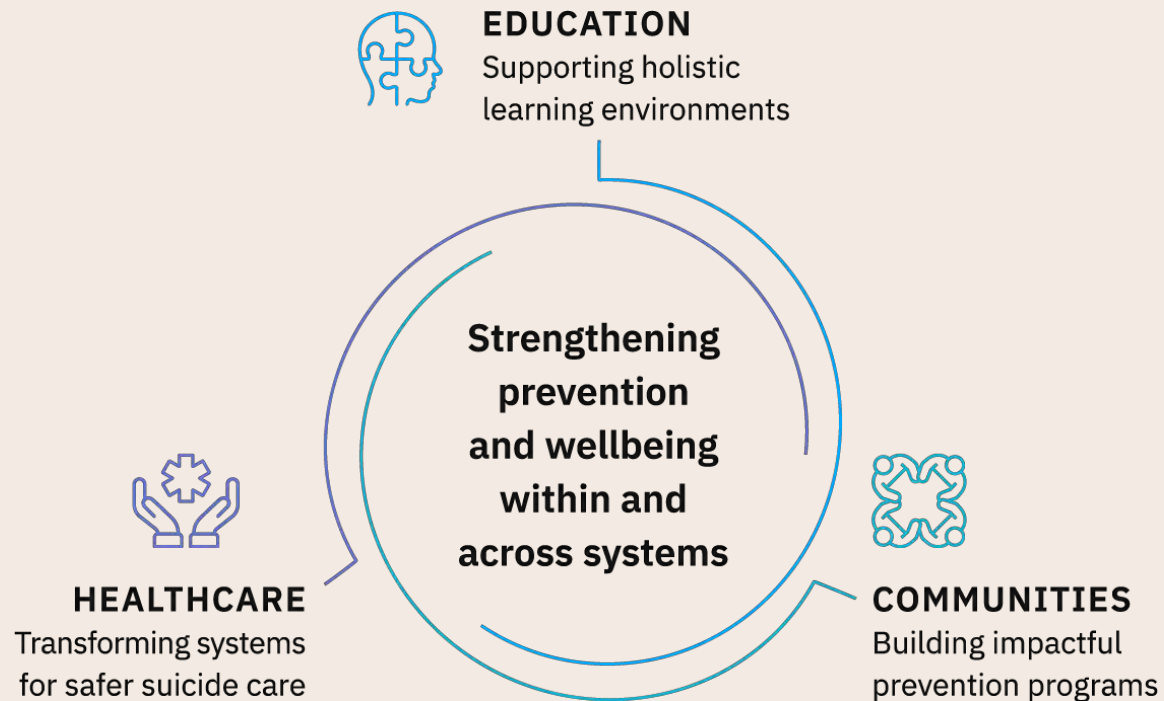


Julie Goldstein, PhD  
*VP of Suicide Prevention*  
*Director of Zero Suicide Institute*  
*Senior Advisor, Suicide Prevention*  
*Resource Center*





Since 1958, Education Development Center (EDC) has collaborated with public and private partners to advance education and health solutions in communities across the globe.



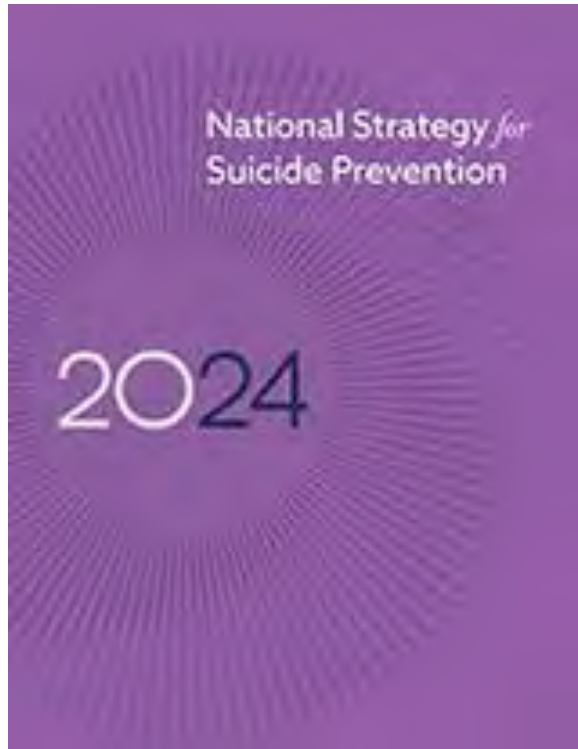
**EDC Solutions** offers versatile consultation and training for **education**, **community**, and **healthcare** systems committed to **improving prevention and wellbeing** for their workforce and the people they serve.

# National Strategy *for* Suicide Prevention Strategic Directions



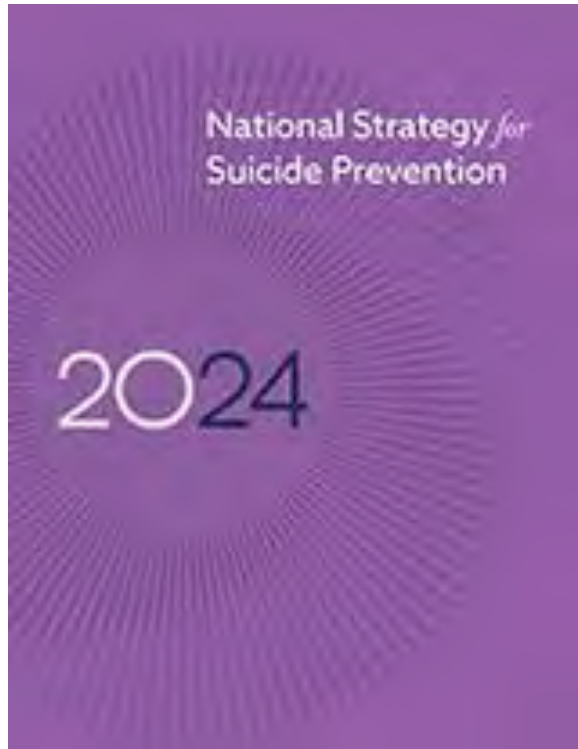


# 2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention



**GOAL 2: Support upstream comprehensive community-based suicide prevention**

# 2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention



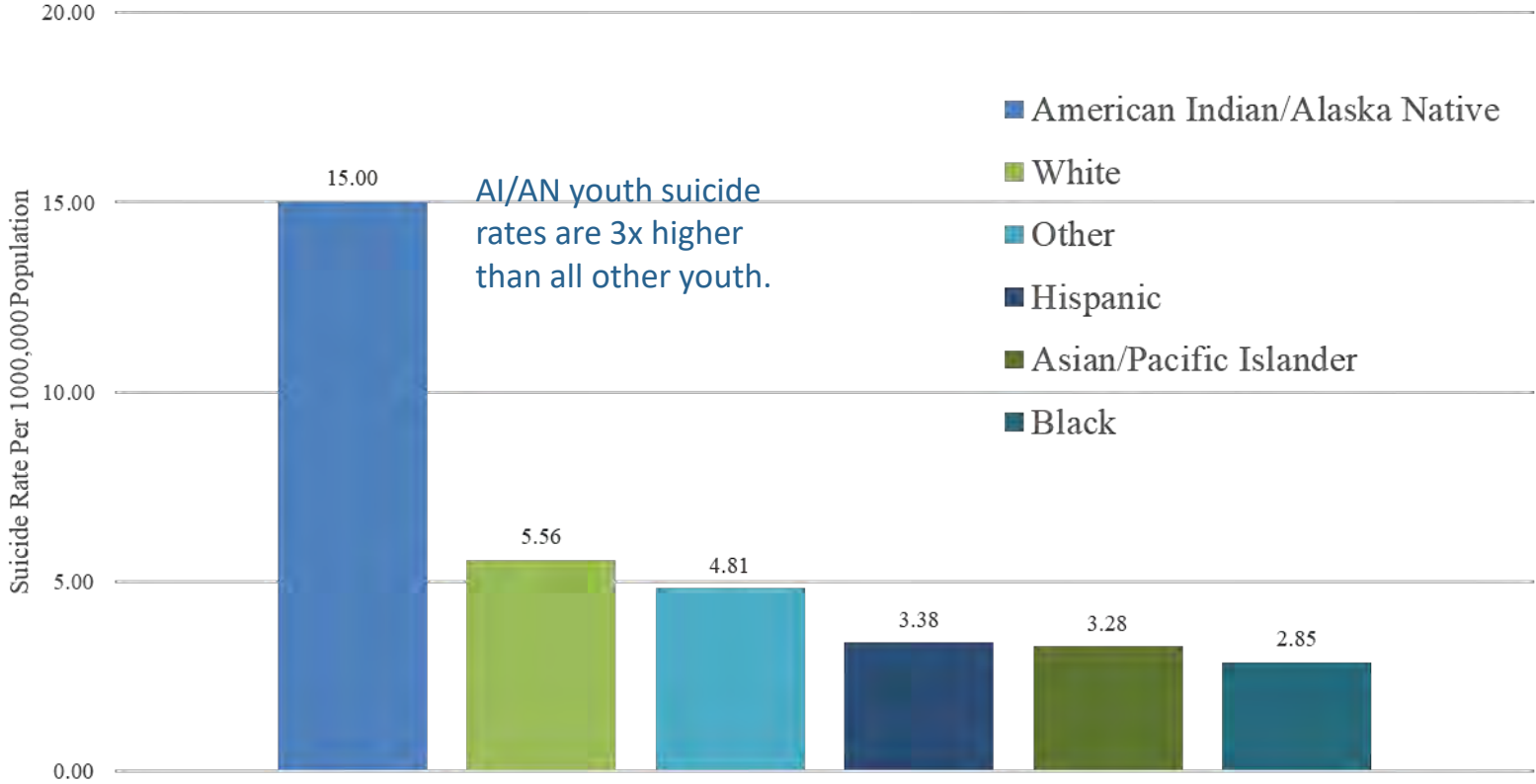
**GOAL 8: Implement effective suicide prevention services as a core component of health care.**

# Youth Suicide in U.S.

## Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among ages 10-14; 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among ages 15-19

- From 2007 through 2021, suicide rates for youth ages 10 to 24 rose 62%, according to the CDC.
- Suicide rates and behaviors have been rising in populations with historically lower rates of suicide events such as African American boys who have rising rates of death by suicide; and increasing suicide attempts, particularly by female, non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black youth
- 20.4% high school youth seriously considered attempting suicide; 9.5% had attempted suicide; 42% report experiencing persistent sadness or hopelessness ([YRBS, 2023 MMWR](#))
- 41% of students who identify as LGBTQI report having seriously considered suicide; 19.7% attempted suicide ([YRBS, 2023 MMWR](#))
- In 9 and 10 year olds, a recent study showed rates of suicidal ideation were 6% and attempts 1%

# U.S. Youth Suicide Rate by Race/Ethnicity: Ages 12-17 Years, 2001-2020

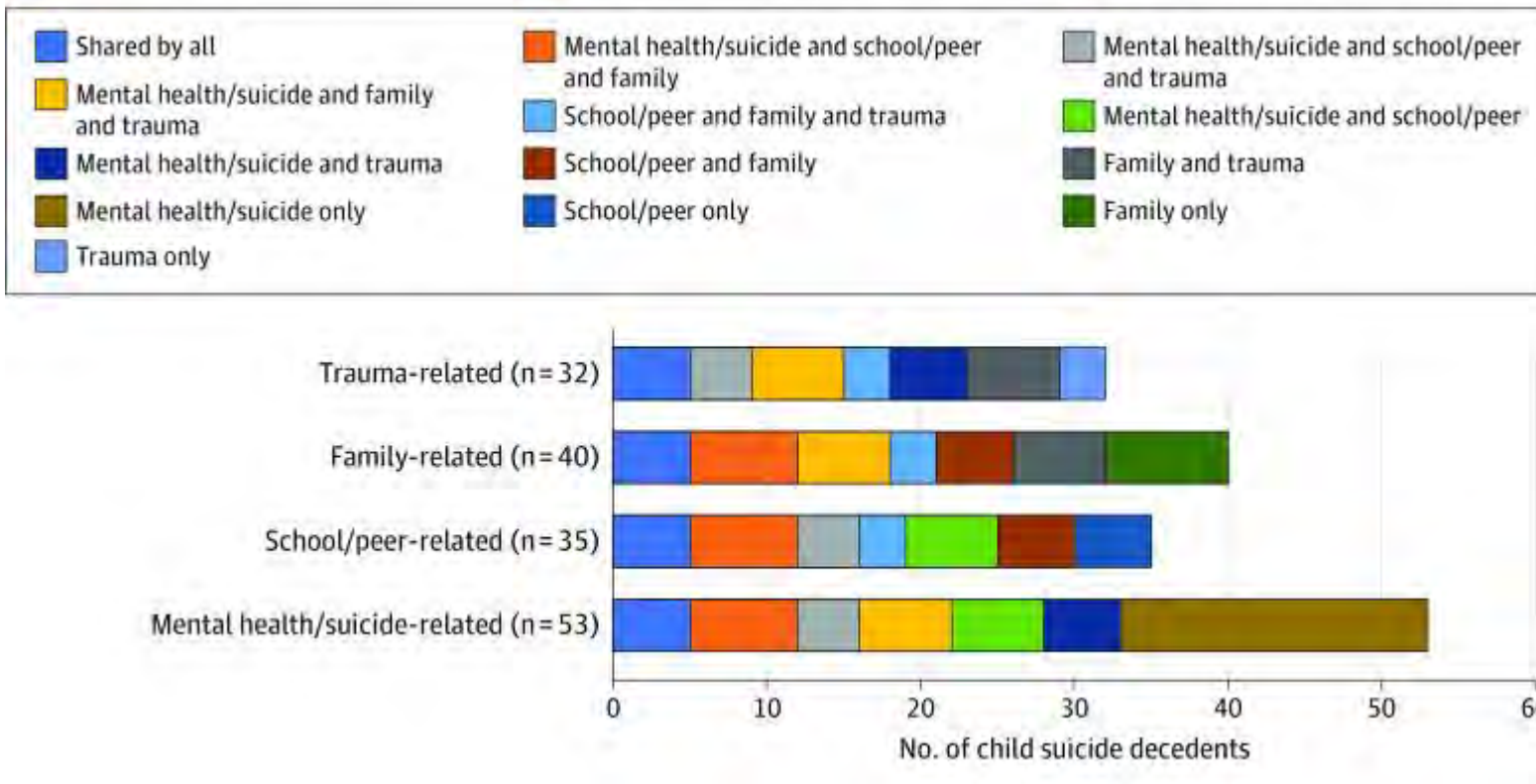


Source: (2) CDC, WISQARS (2022)



# Trends in Childhood Mental Health & Suicide

## Characteristics and Precipitating Circumstances in Suicide Among Kids 5-11 years old



**Can a Young Child Have Suicidal Thoughts?**  
 Are you in a crisis? Call or text [988](tel:988) or text [TALK to 741741](tel:TALKto741741)



**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

[Donate](#)

Read full article [HERE](#)

*“I was working late one evening, after I had put my six-year-old son to bed, when he walked back into the room, stood next to my desk, and – in much the same way he might have asked me to fix him a snack -- asked me if I would help him end his life.”*

- *Kathe Goller*  
 Virginia Area Director,  
 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[Characteristics and Precipitating Circumstances of Suicide Among Children Aged 5 to 11 Years in the United States, 2013-2017 - PubMed](#)



# EDC's Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention Framework & Service: *MTSP for Schools*

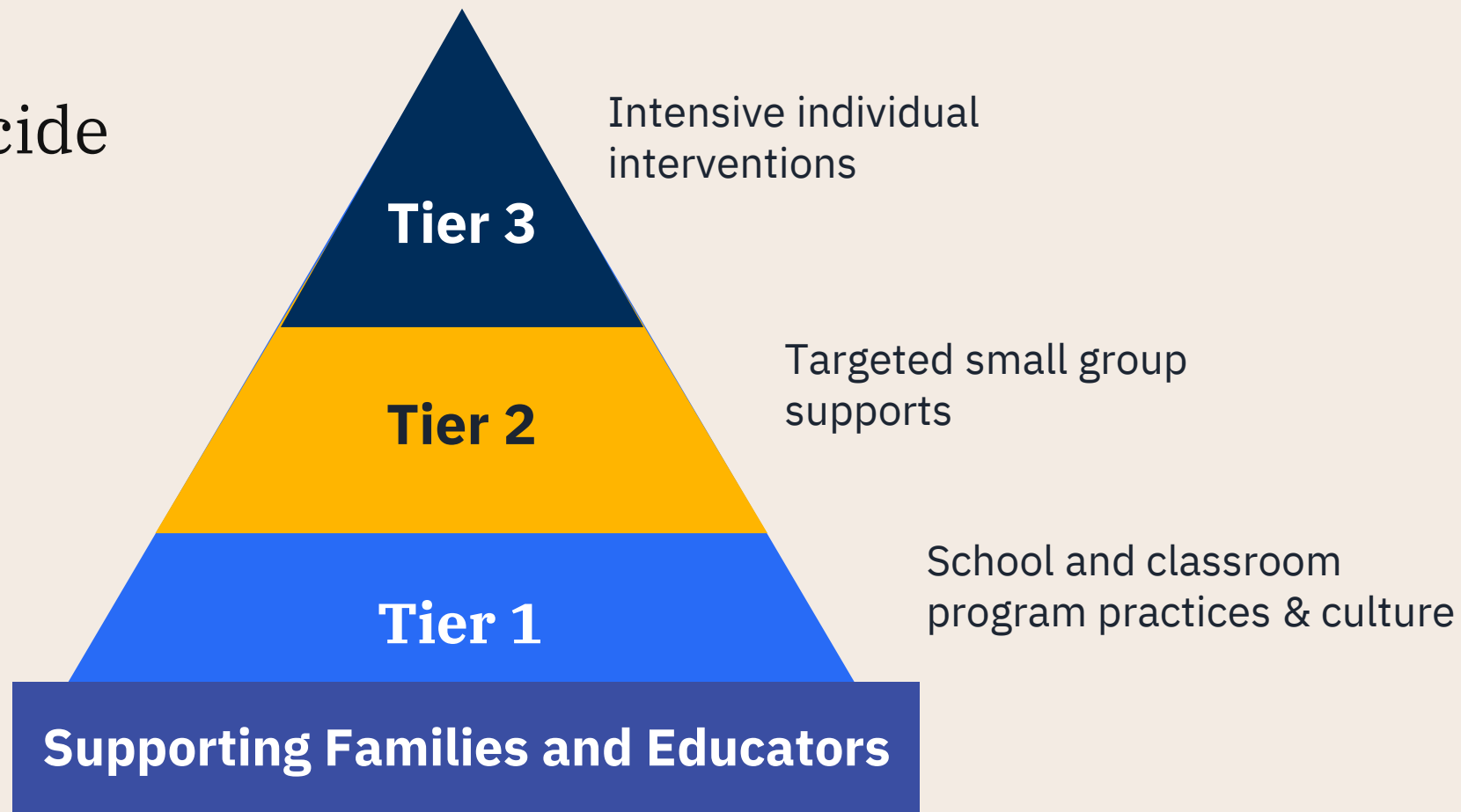
# Systemwide Suicide Prevention from Culture Change to Treatment



Source: [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

- Recognizes the familiarity and comfort schools have with MTSS and builds in suicide specific content given the pressing need in the country
- Built on bringing together our expertise in schools and suicide prevention
- Acknowledges that a comprehensive approach is needed to address suicide and mental health issues
- Systemwide change must incorporate comfort identifying students at risk as well as evidence-based interventions to reduce risk and long-term monitoring
- Data-informed decisions, monitoring and evaluation are key

# Multi-Tiered Approach to Suicide Prevention



## Drivers of Effectiveness

**Leadership Support**

**Data-Driven Decision-Making**

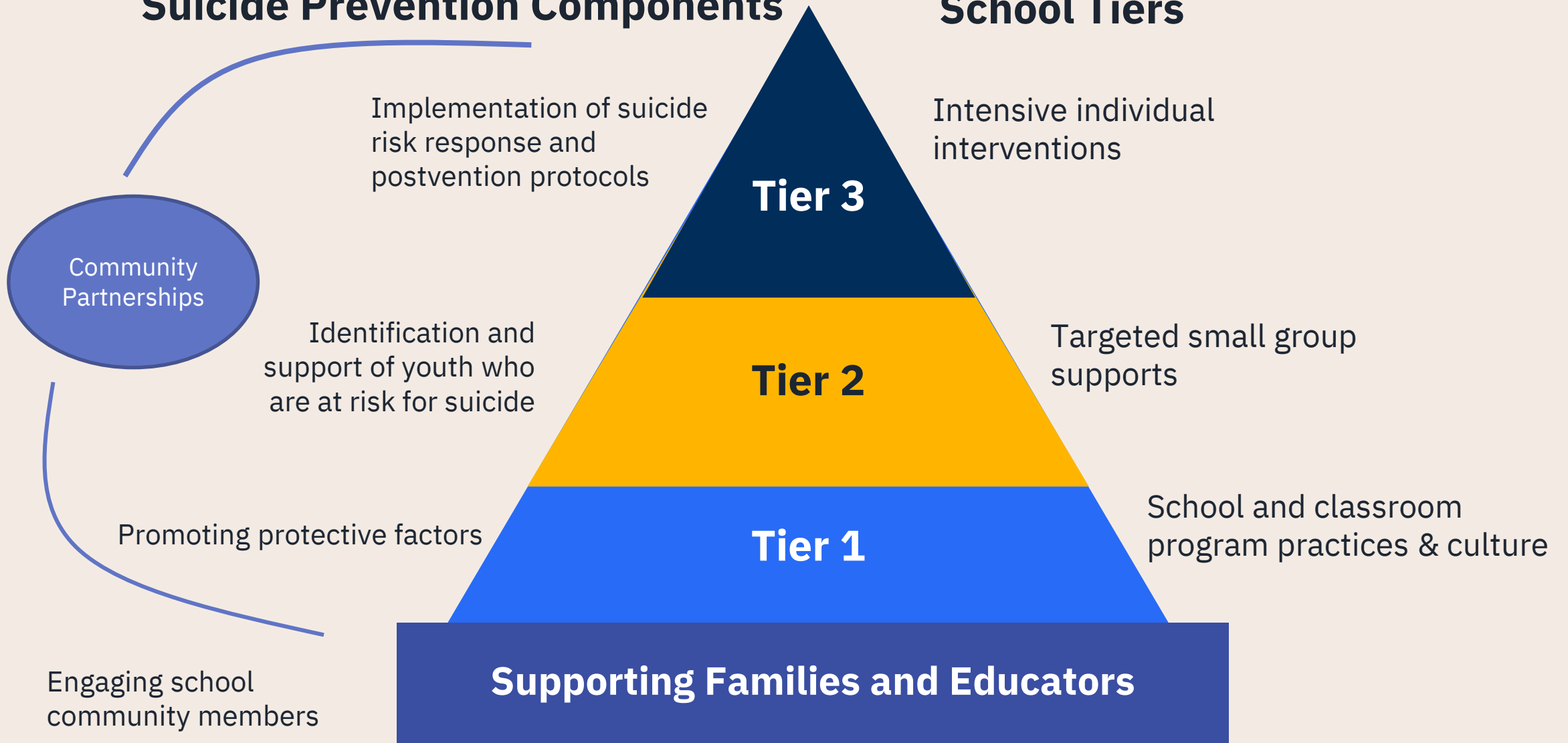
**Effective Implementation**

**Equity & Trauma Informed Practices**

**Communication & Coordination**

## Suicide Prevention Components

## School Tiers





# Multi-Tiered Youth Suicide Prevention

Social  
Emotional  
Learning

Mental  
Health  
Literacy

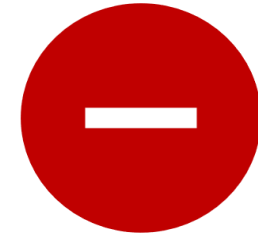
Suicide  
Prevention

# Multi-Tiered Youth Suicide Prevention

- Emotional awareness & management
  - Social relationships (Educator- and peer relationships)
  - Social awareness & problem-solving skills
  - Responsible decision-making
  - Sense of connectedness & belonging
- Emotional self-awareness & management
  - Proactive mental self-care
  - Decrease stigma about needing MH supports
  - Healthy coping practices
  - Enhance help-seeking efficacy
  - Amplify protective factors
- Mitigate risk factors
  - Amplify protective factors
  - Suicide screening
  - Assess for suicidal thoughts/behaviors if warning signs are present



## Social Emotional Wellness & Mental Health Literacy



### Protective Factors for Suicide:

- Social capital & social awareness
- Responsible decision making
- Self- awareness, efficacy, & management
- Emotional awareness & regulation
- Healthy coping & problem-solving
- Growth mindset
- Positive self-esteem & sense of purpose
- Connectedness & belonging

### Risk Factors for Suicide:

- Anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Substance misuse
- Sexual abuse

# 6 Key Suicide Prevention Components for School Systems



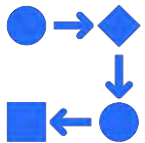
1) Engaging Key School Community Members



2) Developing Community Partnerships



3) Written Policies & Protocols for Helping Students Who Are At Risk for Suicide



4) Written Policies & Protocols for After a Death by Suicide



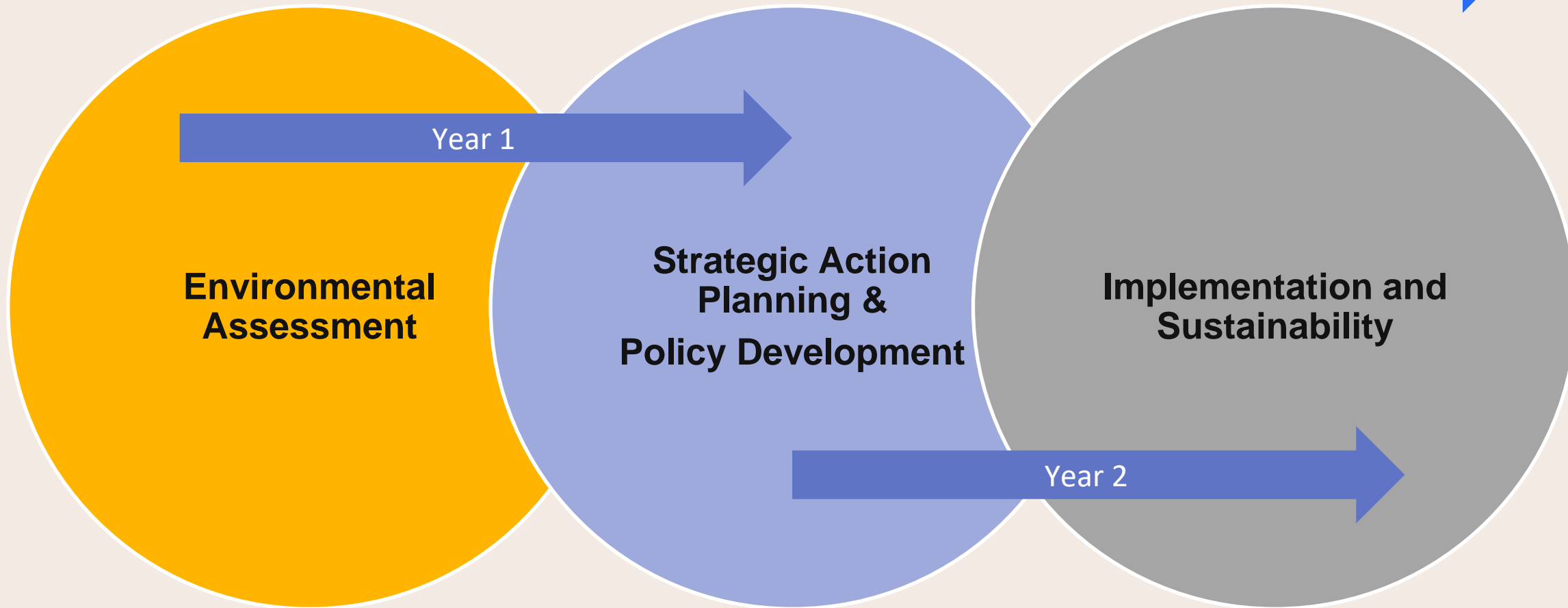
5) Identification & Support of Students Who are At Risk for Suicide



6) Promoting Protective Factors

# MTSP for Schools

2-Year Process:





# Strengthening a Multi-Tiered Approach in Your Schools

## Step 1: Complete a School Suicide Prevention Assessment

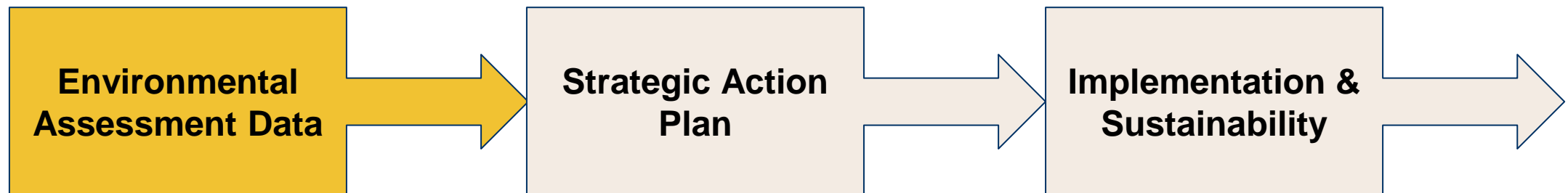
By completing an assessment your school can...

- Assess what you already have in place within the 6 key components
- Identify both strengths and areas for growth in a multi-tiered approach to suicide prevention
- Further develop an understanding of your school context, culture, and resources related to suicide prevention
- Identify areas to prioritize in the development of suicide prevention, mental health promotion, and SEL

# School Suicide Prevention Assessment

## The Environmental Assessment:

- Assess what districts already have in place within the 6 key components
- Identify both strengths and areas for growth in a multi-tiered approach to suicide prevention
- Further develop an understanding of school context, culture, and resources related to suicide prevention
- Identify areas to prioritize in the development of suicide prevention, mental health promotion, and SEL



# School Suicide Prevention Assessment

**School teams rank their current stage of change for each individual assessment item.  
Each ranking indicates...**

<b>1. Unaware</b>	Our school system is not currently aware that there is a need to address this consideration.
<b>2. No Current Efforts</b>	Our school system is aware that there is a need to address this consideration, but we have not taken steps to create change(s) related to this area.
<b>3. Planning</b>	Our school system is aware that there is a need to address this consideration, and we are laying out plans for how to create change(s) related to this area.
<b>4. Implementing</b>	Our school system has begun taking new steps/implementing efforts to create change(s) related to this area. School systems will usually spend the least amount of time in this stage.
<b>5. Sustaining</b>	Our school system has already created change(s) related to this area and we have put in place processes to ensure these change(s) are monitored and continued.

# Group Reflection & Discussion

Take 3 minutes and look through the environmental assessment sample.

- What stands out for you?
- How do you feel your district (or local district) would report on some of these areas? Do they have a district policy for suicide prevention?
- Do you know if your district (or local district) uses mental health related data regularly? MTSS? SEL?
- If you happen to work for an SEA or LEA, please share with your table!

Also, feel free to download the full assessment and companion guide here.

<https://go.edc.org/NCSMH2024>



# Strengthening a Multi-Tiered Approach in Your Schools

## Step 2: Prioritize Gaps to Fill

- Identify which of gaps in the 6 key components are the most important to fill (i.e., this is essential to get in place NOW)
- Identify which of the important gaps are the most feasible to fill within existing school resources, support, context, and culture
- Consider what community partners can support your suicide prevention efforts



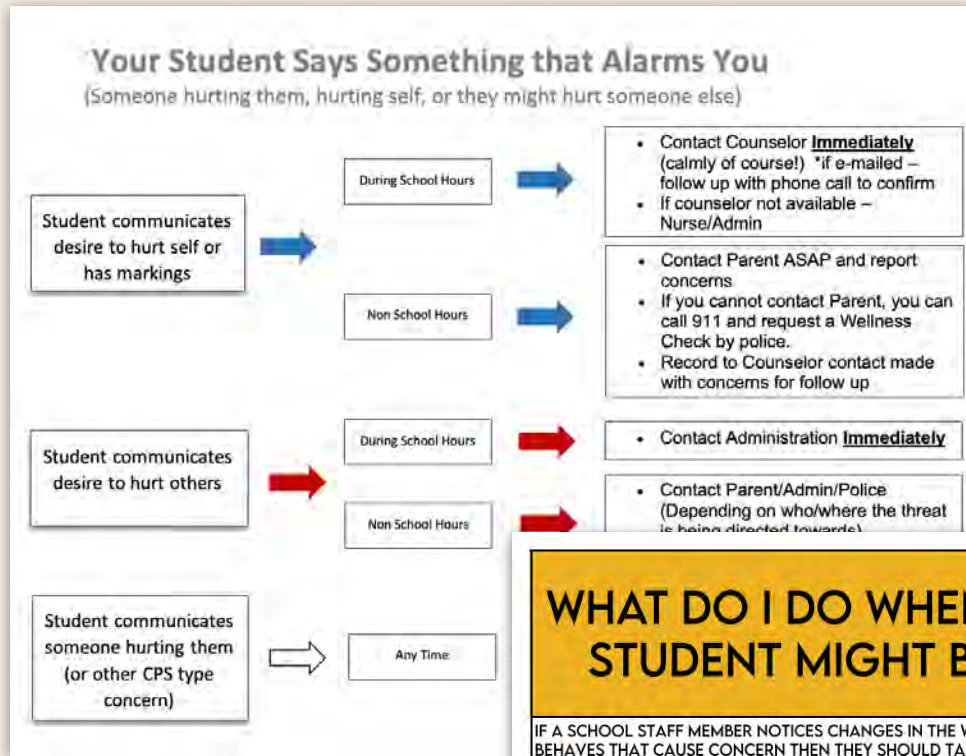


# Strengthening a Multi-Tiered Approach in Your Schools

## Step 3: Put together an action plan to fill these gaps

- Translate prioritized gaps into Goal statements
- Identify what staff will take the lead in achieving each goal
- Meet as a team to monitor progress
- As gaps are filled, focus on *sustainability*
- Strengthen other key components of school suicide prevention over time





↑ Examples of decision-making flowcharts for addressing a student risk/concerns →

## WHAT DO I DO WHEN I NOTICE A STUDENT MIGHT BE AT RISK?

IF A SCHOOL STAFF MEMBER NOTICES CHANGES IN THE WAY A STUDENT THINKS, FEELS, OR BEHAVES THAT CAUSE CONCERN THEN THEY SHOULD TAKE ACTION. THE TYPE OF ACTION REQUIRED DEPENDS ON THE SEVERITY AND FREQUENCY OF THE OBSERVATIONS. THE GENERAL RULE IS:

- THE LONGER THE WORRYING BEHAVIOR PERSISTS (DURATION)
- THE MORE RISKY OR INTENSE THE WORRYING BEHAVIOR IS (INTENSITY)
- THE MORE THE BEHAVIOR INTERFERES WITH THE STUDENT'S DAILY FUNCTIONING,
- THE MORE DISTRESS IT CAUSES THE INDIVIDUAL OR OTHERS,
- THE LENGTH OF TIME THE BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN NOTICED, (DURATION) THEN THE GREATER THE LEVEL OF CONCERN

<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<p><b>NOTICE, TALK TO STUDENT, &amp; GATHER MORE INFORMATION</b></p> <p>IF YOU HAVE NOTICED MINOR CHANGES THAT ARE UNUSUAL FOR THE STUDENT, TALK WITH THE STUDENT. IT IS ALSO WISE TO ASK TO SEE IF OTHERS (TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, PARENTS) HAVE NOTICED THESE CHANGES.</p>
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<p><b>PROVIDE ASSISTANCE &amp; REFER FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT</b></p> <p>IF SEVERAL CHANGES HAVE HAPPENED OVER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME OR BEHAVIORS HAVE NOT IMPROVED, THEN IT IS TIME TO REFER TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT. TALK WITH THE STUDENT TO SHOW YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND THAT YOU WILL BE A PART OF THIS PROCESS IF S/HE WOULD LIKE THAT TO HAPPEN.</p>
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<p><b>IMMEDIATE ACTION</b></p> <p>IN THE EVENT YOU SUSPECT A STUDENT IS IN IMMINENT DANGER OF HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS. SEEK IMMEDIATE MENTAL HEALTH OR EMERGENCY SUPPORT. <a href="#">FLOW CHART</a></p>

### STUDENT DEATH: SUICIDE

"I am sorry to tell you that one of our students, [NAME], has died. I'm also very sad to tell you that the cause of death was suicide.

Many of you may also feel very sad. Others may feel other emotions such as anger or confusion. It's okay to feel whatever emotions you might be feeling. When someone takes their own life, it leads to a lot of questions, some of which may never be completely answered.

While we may never know why [NAME] ended [HIS/HER] life, we do know that suicide has many causes. In many cases, a mental health condition is part of it, and these conditions are treatable. It's really important if you're not feeling well in any way to reach out for help. Suicide should not be an option. We have support available to you today and every day.

Rumors may come out about what happened, but please don't spread them. They may turn out to be untrue and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to [NAME] and [HIS/HER] family and friends. I'm going to do my best to give you the most accurate information as soon as I know it.

Each of us will react to [NAME]'s death in our way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Some of us may have known [NAME] well, and some of us may not. But either way, we may have strong feelings. You might find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork for a little while. On the other hand, you might find that focusing on school helps take your mind off what has happened. Either is okay.

I want you to know that your teachers and I are here for you. We also have counselors here to help us cope with what happened. If you'd like to talk to one of them, just let me or one of your teachers know or look for counselors in [NOTE SPECIFIC LOCATION] between classes or during lunch.

↑ Classroom meeting script for communicating student's death by suicide

# Evidence of Feasibility

# Outcomes & Lessons Learned from Pilot

# What do district teams end with?

- ✓ **Strategic Plan & Vision** for implementation and alignment of priorities and practices across tiers of support
- ✓ **Environmental Assessment Data** to inform strategy
- ✓ **District-Wide Suicide Prevention Policy & Documented Protocols** for helping students at-risk of suicide, and for response after a suicide
- ✓ **Resources and Trainings** for identifying at-risk youth
- ✓ **Partnerships** with local community supports
- ✓ **Communication Plans & Materials**

# Lessons Learned

## Accountability

TA is essential for accountability be revisiting strategic action plans regularly.

## Collaboration

District teams took advantage of sharing products, strategies, challenges.

## Sustainability

Policies & Protocols transcend staff turnover and strengthen common language across schools and community

## Implementation

Many schools have very outdated policies and protocols or nothing in place, and often when they are in place, few know they exist!

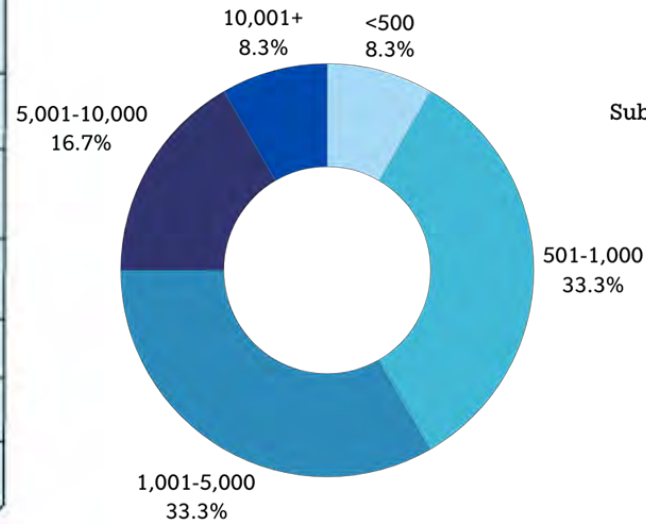


# 12 school corporations (districts) in 6 counties

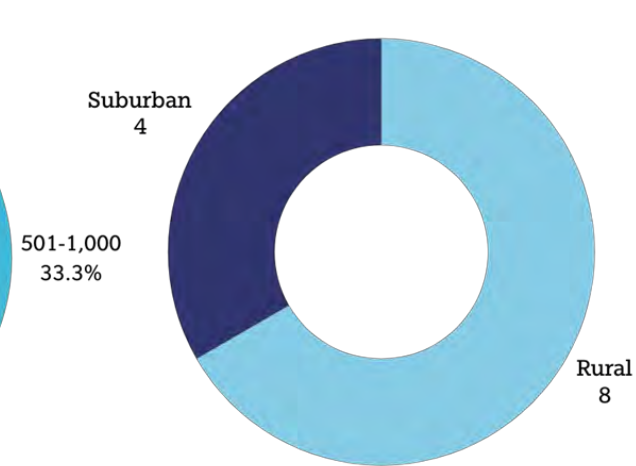


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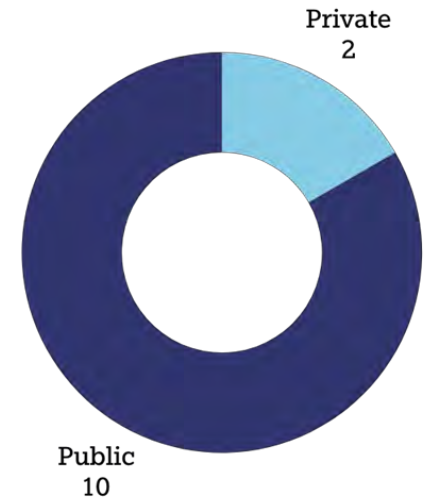
### Number of Students



### Geographic Location



### Funding

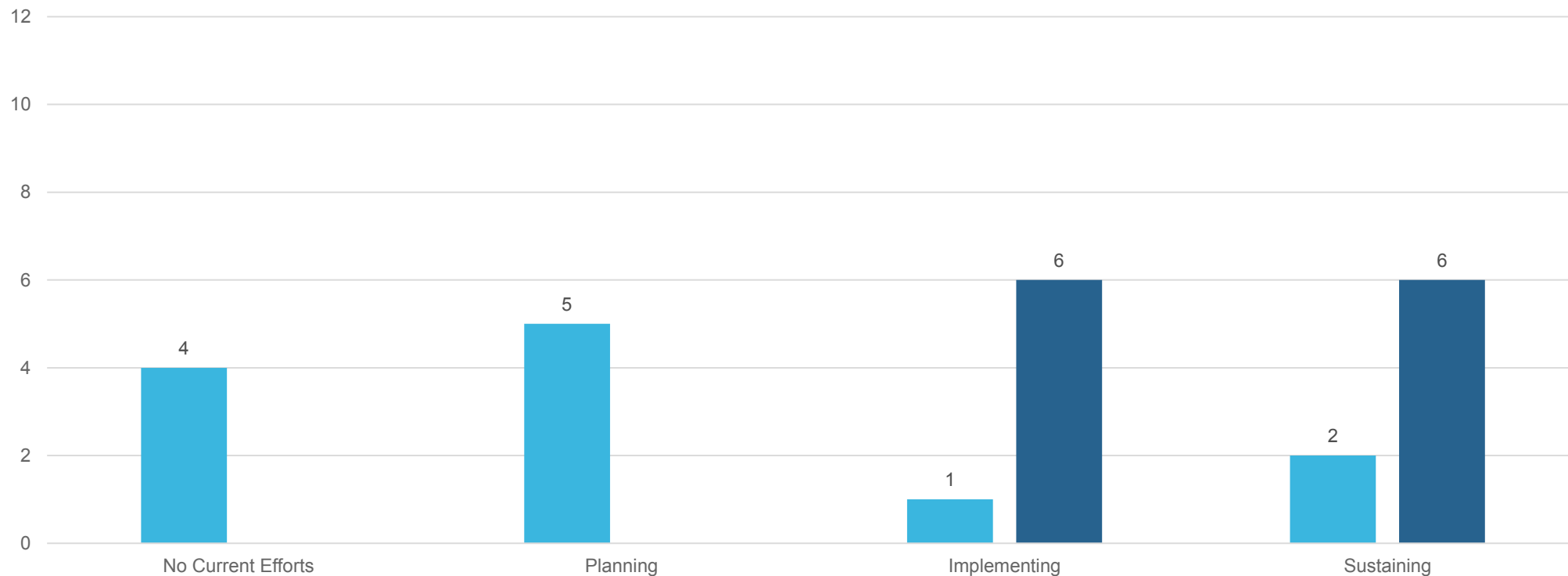


**34,000**  
students

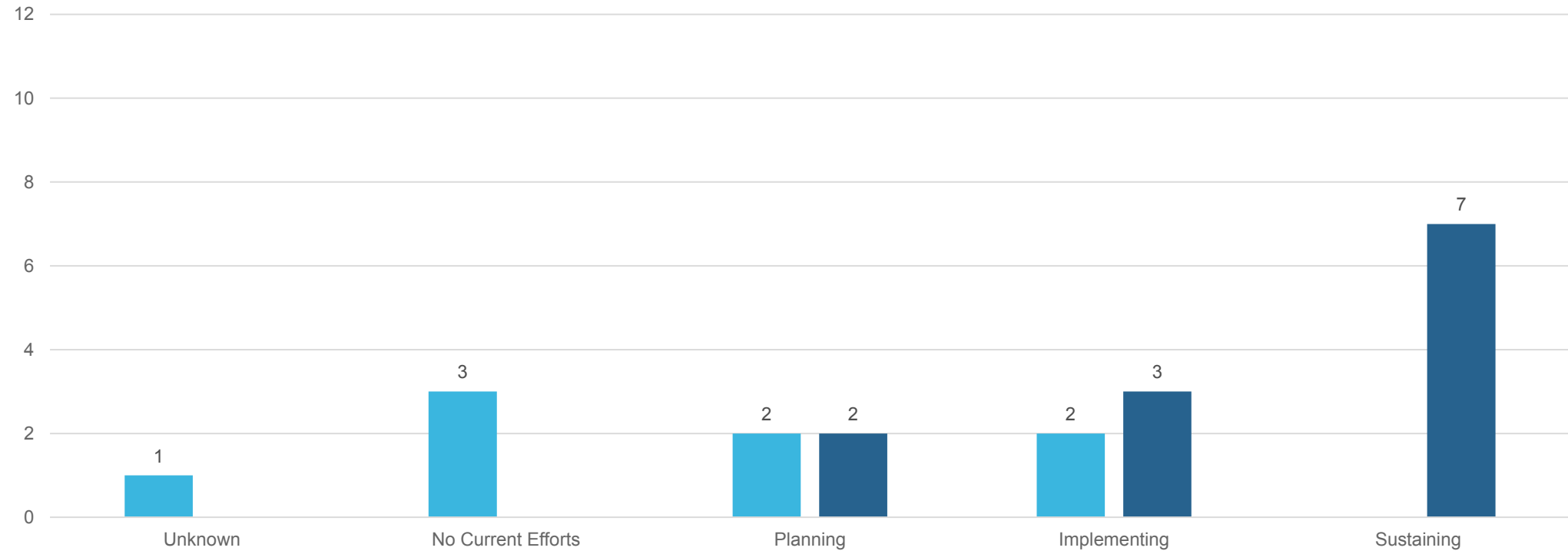
**2,300**  
staff

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2024). CCD public school district data for the 2022-24 school years

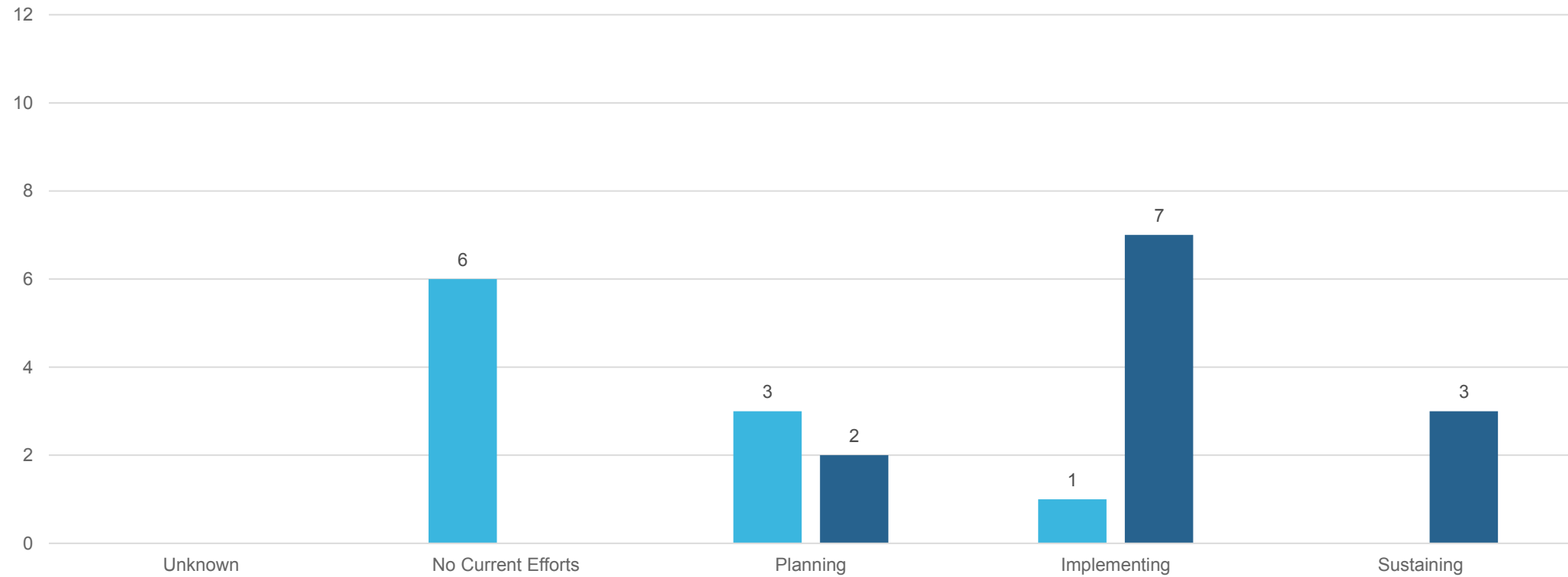
## School districts have current policies and protocols in place for identifying and supporting youth who are at risk for suicide



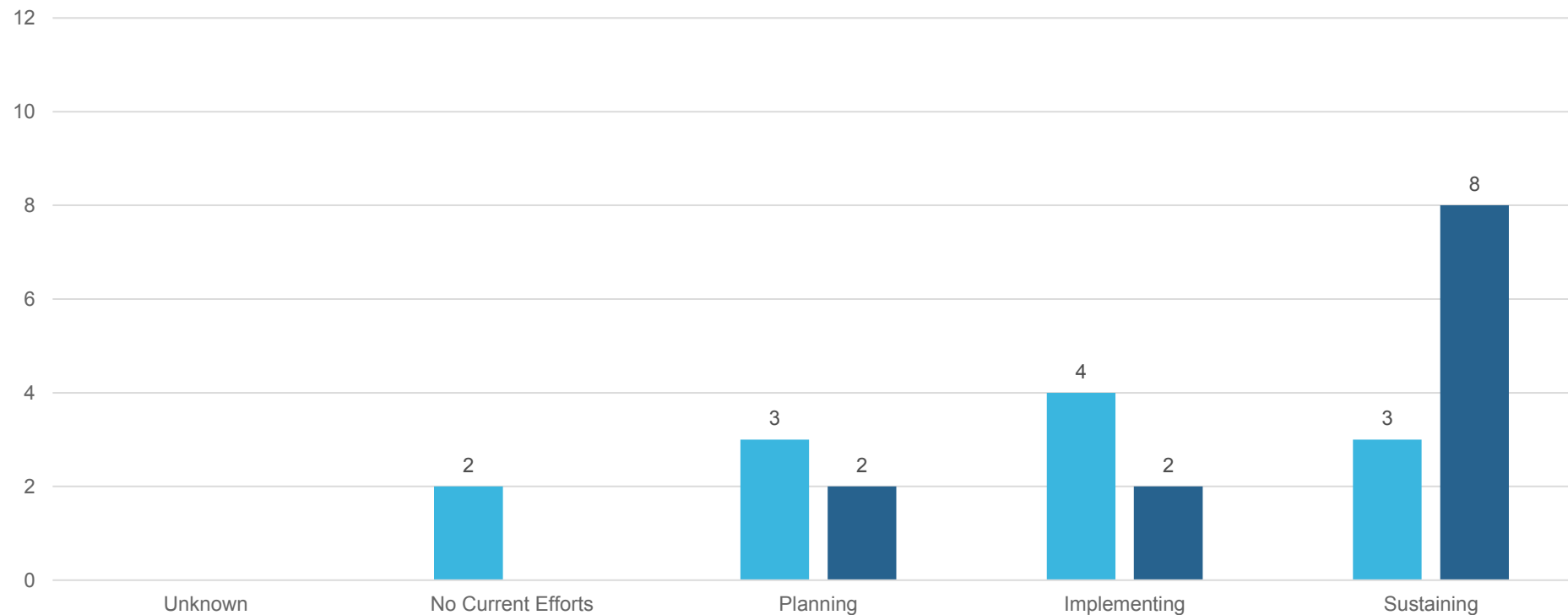
## School district suicide prevention trainings include information on policies and protocols for supporting students identified as at risk for suicide



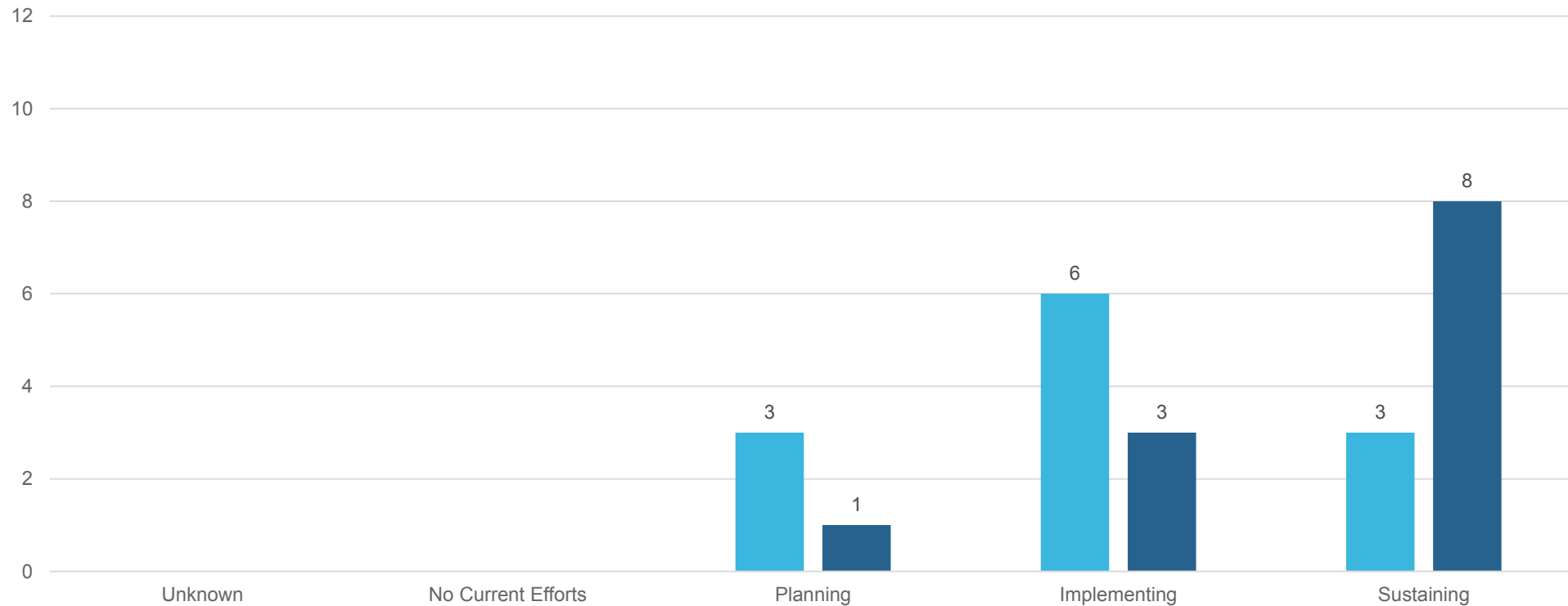
## School districts train staff in suicide risk response policies and protocols



## School districts provide students who are identified as at risk for suicide with timely in-house mental health services

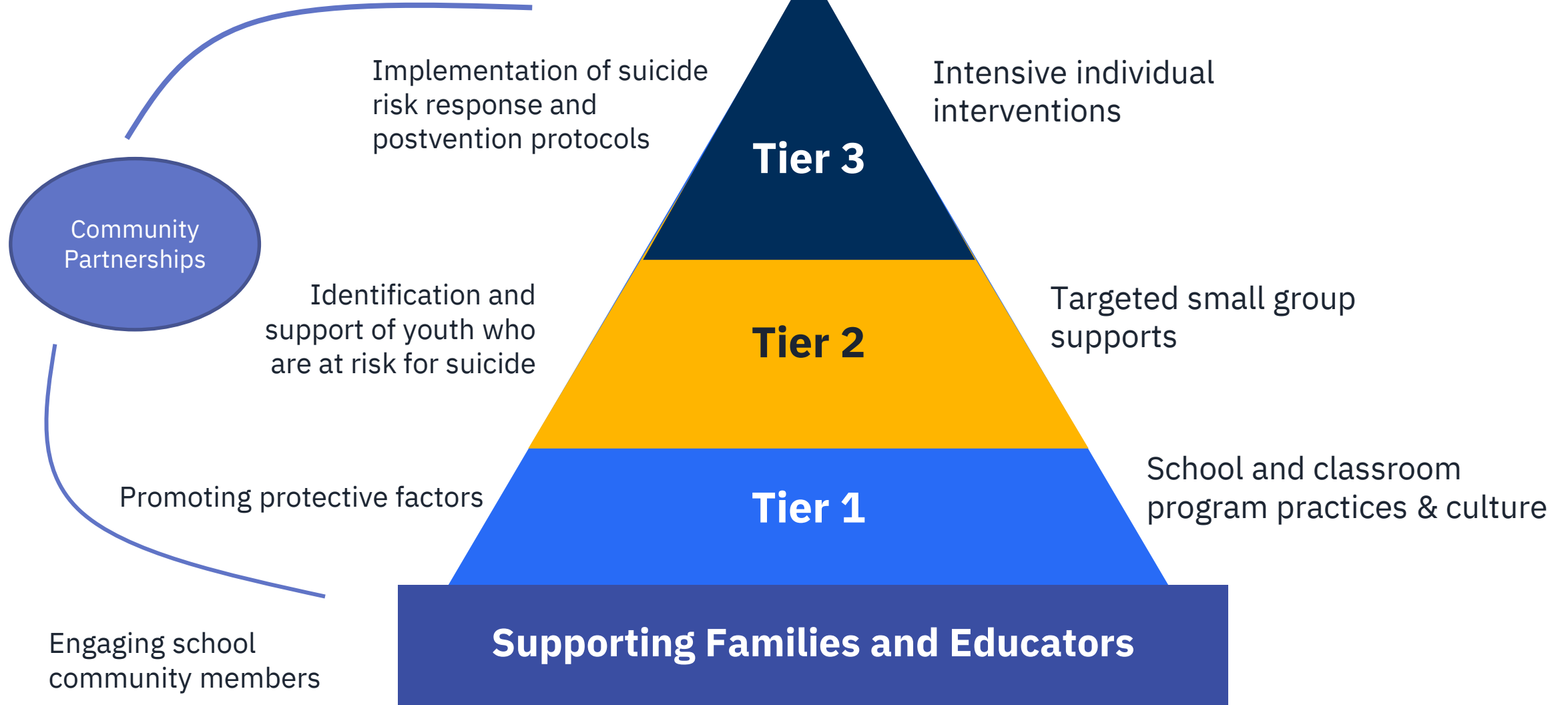


## School districts are able to refer youth identified as at risk for suicide to community mental health or crisis services



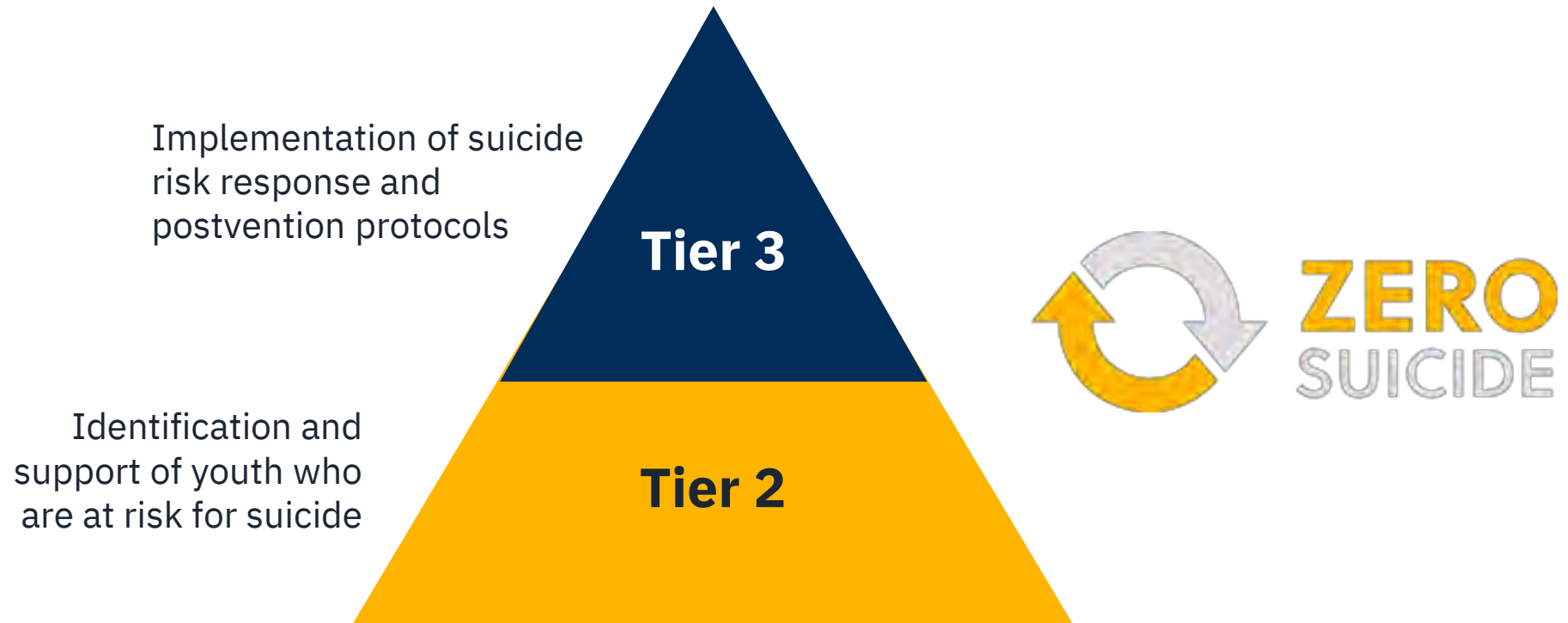
## Suicide Prevention Components

## School Tiers



# Intervening and Caring for Students at Risk for Suicide

## Tiers 2 and 3





# Zero Suicide Framework

## CORE COMPONENTS OF SAFE SUICIDE CARE

- » These seven elements are critical to safer care
- » Represent a holistic approach to suicide prevention
- » Can and should be considered on a simultaneous continuum



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# Zero Suicide: Care Pathway/Clinical Care

- Identify
- Engage
- Treat
- Transition



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# IDENTIFY

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Identify individuals with suicide risk via comprehensive screening and assessment.

# ENGAGE

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Engage all individuals at-risk of suicide using a suicide care management plan.



**Suicide Prevention  
Resource Center**



**Now offering CMEs!**

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# **Safety Planning for Youth Suicide Prevention**

<https://ow.ly/cXve50RoaWE>



# Counseling On Access To Lethal Means (CALM) Course

This free online course is designed to help mental health professionals counsel people at risk for suicide—and their families—on reducing access to lethal means.

- ✓ Updated content
- ✓ Real-world case studies
- ✓ Mobile-friendly design



[Counseling on Access to Lethal Means \(CALM\) | Solutions.edc.org](https://www.solutions.edc.org/counseling-on-access-to-lethal-means)

# TREAT

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© 2021 Zero Suicide Institute

Treat suicidal thoughts and behaviors using evidence-based treatments.

# TRANSITION

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© 2021 Zero Suicide Institute

Transition individuals through care with warm hand-offs and supportive contacts.





# Summary: Suicide Care in Schools

- » Once identified, referrals must be timely and effective
- » Kids are more likely to be seen routinely in school, less disruptive
- » Suicide care and best practices can take place in schools
- » Referral to ER/hospital for those at risk overutilized; necessary for very small percent of kids
- » Health Care Team – prepared to screen, safety plan, make warm handoffs
- » School Mental Health Clinician – see youth regularly and provide treatment, update safety plan
- » Share safety plan with guidance counselors, nurse, coaches, others
- » Collaborate closely with external providers

# Resources

# Zero Suicide Toolkit

The online Zero Suicide Toolkit offers free and publicly available tools, strategies, and resources.

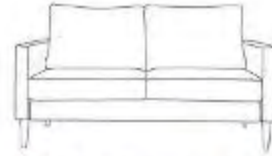


## RESOURCES

- » Information
- » Materials
- » Outcomes
- » Innovations
- » Research
- » Tools
- » Readings
- » Videos
- » Webinars
- » Podcasts

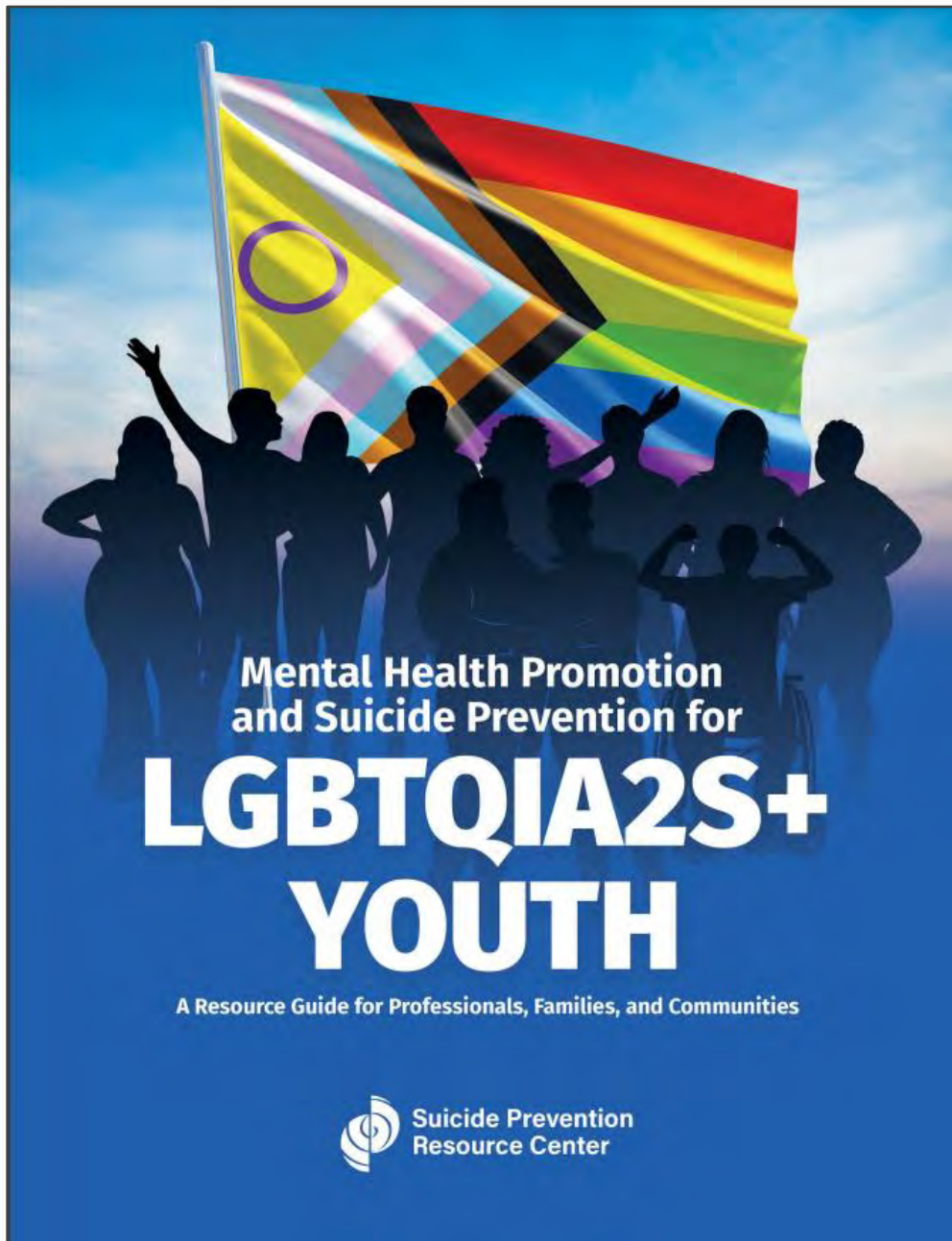
The screenshot shows the Zero Suicide website homepage. At the top is the Zero Suicide logo and navigation links: 'OUR TEAM', 'WHAT'S NEW', 'CONTACT US', 'LOG IN', and 'DONOR/MAKE A CONTRIBUTION'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a menu with 'Home', 'About', 'Evidence', 'Movement', 'Toolkit', and 'Resources'. The main content area features a large yellow banner with the headline 'Study: Zero Suicide Practices Reduce Suicides'. Below the headline is a sub-headline: 'New study shows patients at outpatient clinics using Zero Suicide practices significantly less likely to attempt suicide.' and a 'Learn More' button. Below the banner is a section titled 'ZERO SUICIDE IS A TRANSFORMATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS'. To the right of this text is an image of a healthcare professional in blue scrubs holding a white cloth. Below the text is a paragraph: 'The foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under the care of health and behavioral health systems are preventable. For systems dedicated to improving patient safety, Zero Suicide presents an aspirational challenge and practical framework for system-wide transformation toward safer suicide care.' At the bottom of the page is a dark grey footer with logos for 'ACTION ALLIANCE', 'UHS', 'ZERO SUICIDE INSTITUTE', 'SPRC', and 'SAMHSA'. Below the footer is a large yellow banner with the text 'ZeroSuicide.com'.





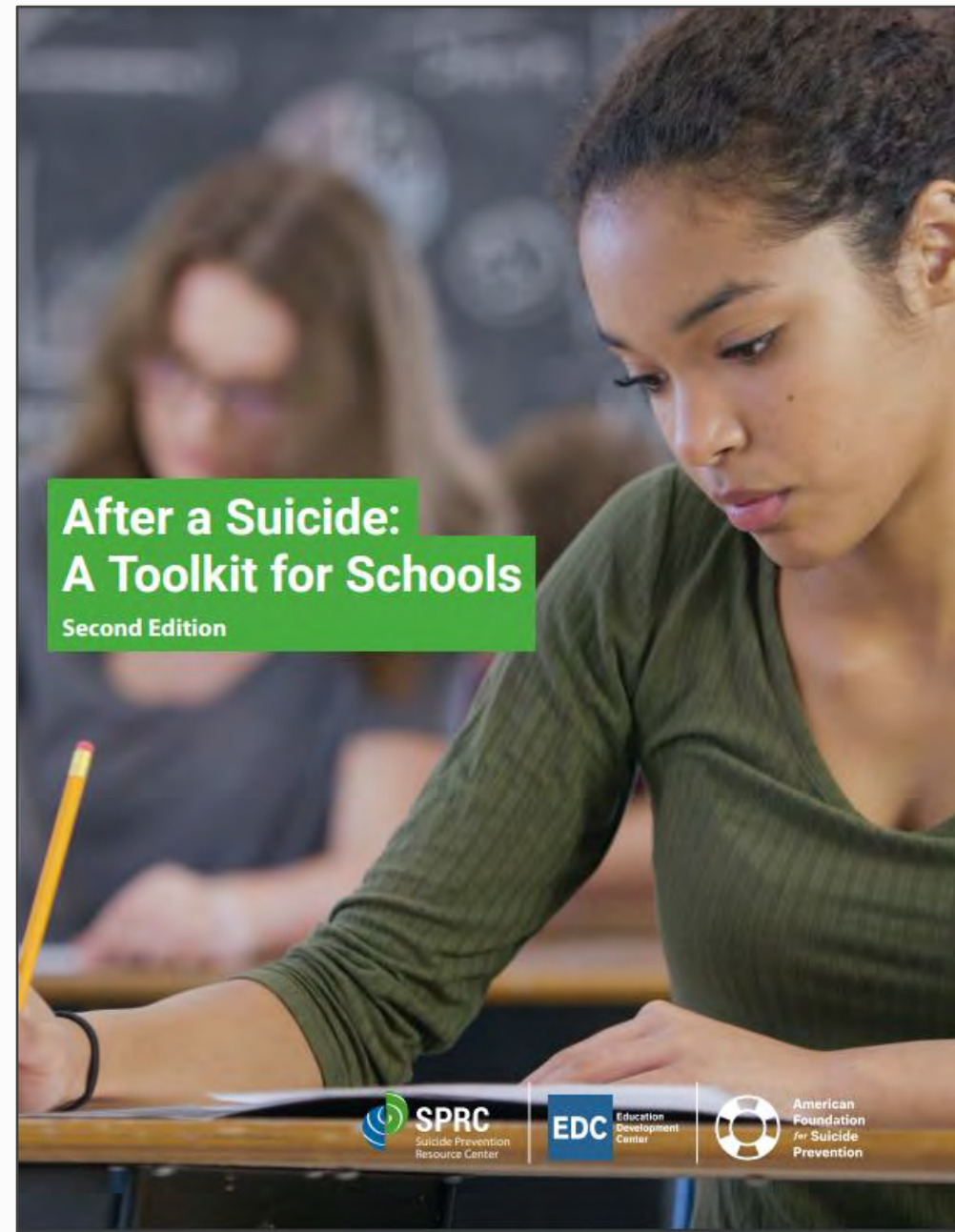
parents to parents





Mental Health Promotion  
and Suicide Prevention for  
**LGBTQIA2S+**  
**YOUTH**

A Resource Guide for Professionals, Families, and Communities



**After a Suicide:**  
**A Toolkit for Schools**


Second Edition





## Preventing Suicide The Role of High School Mental Health Providers

### Key Steps to Reduce Suicide Risk among Your Students:

-  Understand how suicide prevention fits with your role as a high school mental health provider
-  Identify students who may be at risk for suicide
-  Respond to students who may be at risk for suicide
-  Be prepared to respond to a suicide death
-  Consider becoming involved in schoolwide suicide prevention

**Ellen's English teacher** told the school counselor, **Ms. Thompson**, that several of Ellen's class writing assignments indicated that she was under a lot of stress and might want to kill herself. Ms. Thompson asked Ellen to come in for a visit with her.

Ms. Thompson looked at a few of Ellen's writings and talked with her about how she was feeling. Next, Ms. Thompson conducted an assessment to determine Ellen's risk for suicide. After reviewing the results, she notified Ellen's parents that Ellen was clearly at risk. Then she took the following steps:

- Referred Ellen to a school support group for students dealing with a lot of stress
- Suggested she join an afterschool math tutoring program to get extra help
- Helped her make an appointment with a psychologist at a local community mental health center

During the next weeks, Ms. Thompson stayed in contact with Ellen to ensure that she was following through on the suggested steps and assist her as needed. She also encouraged Ellen to contact her at any time if she wanted to talk.

*(Based on the experiences of a school psychologist)*

## Preventing Suicide The Role of High School Teachers

### Key Steps to Reduce Suicide Risk among Your Students:

-  Understand how suicide prevention fits with your role as a high school teacher
-  Identify students who may be at risk for suicide
-  Respond to students who may be at risk for suicide
-  Be prepared to respond to a suicide death
-  Consider becoming involved in schoolwide suicide prevention

**Ms. Gomez, a high school social studies teacher**, was concerned about her student Tia because she knew Tia had problems at home. One day she overheard Tia tell a friend that she was totally depressed from being dumped by her boyfriend, had given up trying to pass math, and thought her friend who had recently taken his life had the right idea.

Ms. Gomez asked Tia if she would be willing to talk with her, and she agreed. When they met, Ms. Gomez talked with her about what was going on and how she was feeling. Then Ms. Gomez asked if Tia would go to see a school counselor right away, and she reluctantly agreed. Ms. Gomez walked with her to the counseling center, and Tia talked with a counselor. Later that day, Ms. Gomez met with the counselor to provide critical background information about Tia that could be used in assessing her degree of risk.

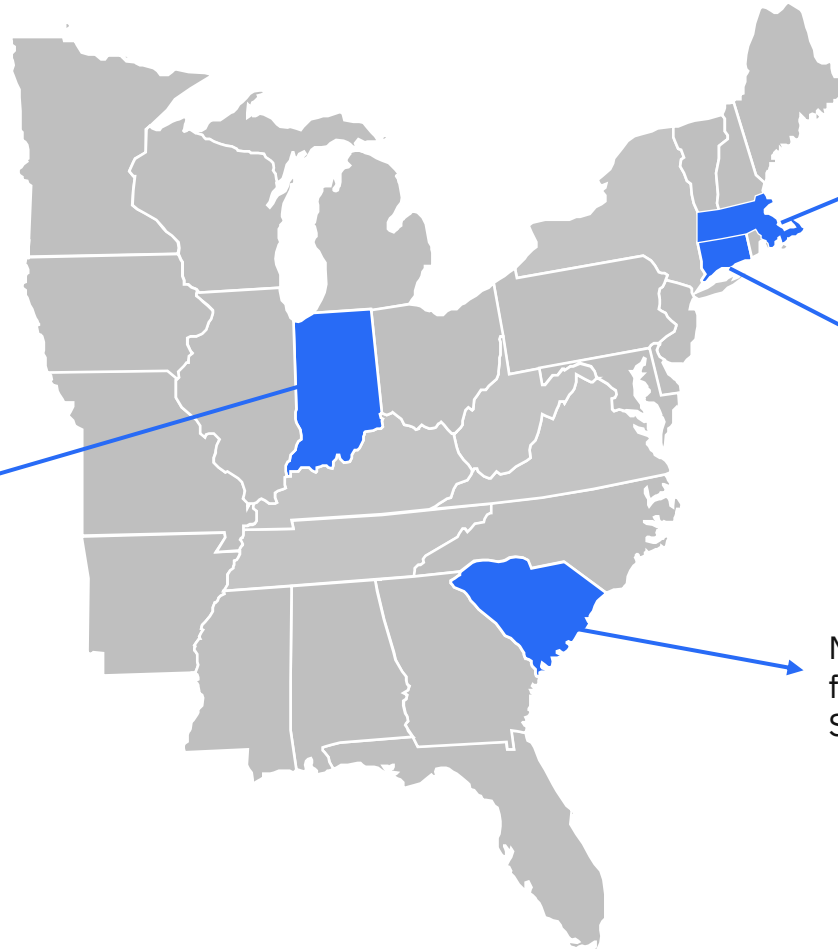
*(Based on the experiences of a school psychologist)*



## Education & Wellbeing

### *Sample Projects*

Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools, 19 Districts (2022-2026)



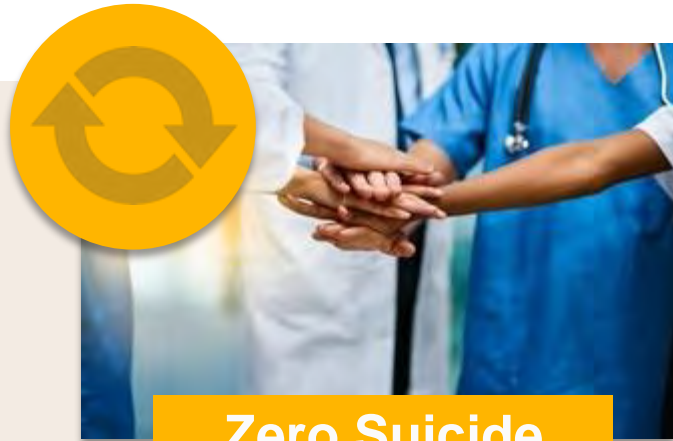
Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools  
MA 8 Districts (2024-2029)

Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools  
CT 5 Districts (2024-2028)

Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools  
SC 3 Districts (2024-2028)



## Zero Suicide Institute Safer Suicide Care Initiatives



### Zero Suicide

**Zero Suicide** training and consultation includes our signature Zero Suicide Academy® and Getting Further with Zero Suicide consultation for health and behavioral healthcare systems



### AMSR

**Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk** offers in-person, online, and on demand training for professionals across care settings to recognize, assess, and manage suicide risk

# Additional resources available here:



<https://go.edc.org/NCSMH2024>

For more information, check out:  
<https://solutions.edc.org/>

Contact us:  
Julie Goldstein Grumet,  
[jgoldstein@edc.org](mailto:jgoldstein@edc.org)

Richard Fournier,  
[rfournier@edc.org](mailto:rfournier@edc.org)

# Questions?

Thank you

Merci

Gracias

شكرا