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**Suicide Education, Research and Advocacy (SERA)**

**Position Paper**

All too often, our community is faced with the tragic loss of children and adolescents due to suicide. Following such a devastating event, communities, schools, families, and loved ones are often traumatized and struggle to cope and respond. Our community organization, the Greater

Cincinnati Suicide Education, Research and Advocacy (SERA) Collaborative provides resources to help the community respond and cope with the tragic loss of a young person to suicide.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers and attempts greatly outnumber

completions. From 2012 to 2017, there was an 80% rate increase of 8 to 12 year olds dying by suicide. In 2017, Ohio ranked as the 33rd highest rate of suicide in the U.S. In 2013, 7.8% of girls and 4.5% of boys reported a suicide attempt. (New York State Psychiatric Institute, 2019).

A student’s suicide has a significant impact on other students, as well as the entire school community. As this problem has gained attention, national centers have recognized the need for schools and communities to have programs to prevent suicide and manage the critical situation in the aftermath of a suicide. Organizations such as the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have offered tool kits and in depth guides to suicide prevention and postvention. Postventions are interventions taken after a suicide that include procedures to alleviate the distress of the school community, reduce the risk of imitative suicidal behavior, and promote the healthy recovery of the affected individuals. These evidence informed guides assist schools and community partners in preparing and responding to a teen suicide.

The SERA Collaborative is dedicated to engage, organize, and work with the community, focusing on schools, to increase knowledge, resources, and support structures so all are able to have access to the best suicide prevention and postvention resources.

SERA’s efforts are focused on providing information and programming to help support those dealing with loss after a suicide and to prevent suicide through the following goals:

1. Identify and promote evidence based suicide prevention and postvention resources

2. Develop resource infrastructures to respond to postvention needs

3. Engage community leaders to raise awareness of these important issues

4. Establish advocacy in the school and school leadership to provide the resources of time and effort to engage in prevention and postvention resources

The tragic loss of children and adolescents to suicide remains under recognized in our society, and our current community response to suicide and prevention demands improvement.

Source: Lesser, A. (2019, September). Helping Save Lives Using the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale. Pediatric Mental Health Symposium. Mason, Ohio.

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