

Suicide Education, Research and Advocacy (SERA) Position Paper

All too often, our community is faced with the tragic loss of a young person 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 third leading cause of death among teenagers and attempts greatly outnumber completions with 100 to 200 attempts for each death. One in 15 high school students attempt suicide each year, and nearly 2.5 percent of high school students report having made a suicide attempt that required medical attention. In addition, data shows suicides often stem from underlying mental health disorders such as depression and substance abuse.

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 of schools and communities to have programs to prevent suicide and manage the critical situation in the aftermath of a suicide. Agencies 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 to increase knowledge, resources, and support structures so all are able to have access to the best suicide prevention and postvention programs.

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 programs
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 programs

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

The community organizations committed to SERA's mission are listed below on this position paper. Collectively these organizations have agreed to commit professional time, clinical expertise, volunteer services and financial supports to ensure the success of SERA.

This communication comes to you from the following SERA Collaborative partners:

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