

SERA | Suicide Education, collaborative | Research & Advocacy

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 schools and 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. In 2022, there was a 6.1 rate (per 100,000) of deaths from suicide for youth ages 10-17 in Ohio (HPIO Data Snapshot, 2024). From 2018-2022 there were 73 youth and young adults (up to 22 years old) who died by suicide in Hamilton County alone (Youth Suicide Annual Report, 2024). In 2023, Ohio Statewide data reported 250 people ages 10-24 died by suicide (Ohio Department of Health, 2024).

A student's suicide has a significant impact on other students, as well as the entire school community. Recognizing the problem, the Ohio Legislature has created mandates for schools and communities to implement evidence-based programs to prevent suicide. Additionally, managing the critical situation in the aftermath of a suicide has been acknowledged as schools must keep an up-to-date emergency management plan. Organizations such as the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have offered funding, tool kits and in-depth guides for 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 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 postvention resources. Recognizing that there are many efforts around prevention in Greater Cincinnati, SERA operates in a targeted effort of postvention specifically.

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

1. Identify and promote evidence-based suicide postvention resources
2. Develop resource infrastructures to respond to postvention needs
3. Engage community leaders to raise awareness of these important issues
4. Advocate with school and school leadership to provide the resources of time and effort to engage in postvention

While our schools and communities continue to implement prevention and postvention strategies, suicide remains a consistent concern and staying vigilant is imperative to alleviate the stress this causes our communities.

This communication comes to you from the following SERA Collaborative partner schools and organizations:

- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Hamilton County Crisis Response Center
- Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Service Board
- Hamilton County Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Indian Hill Exempted Village School District
- Kings Local School District
- MindPeace

References

Data Snapshot: Suicide in Ohio. (2024, February). Health Policy Institute of Ohio. <https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/health-policy-news/2024/02/09/hpio-data-snapshot-details-suicide-trends-in-ohio>

Ohio Suicide Report. (2024). Ohio Department of Health.

Youth Suicide Annual Report. (2024). The Suicide Epidemiology Team of Southwest Ohio.