

Timothy Keck, Interim Secretary

Sam Brownback, Governor

To: House Education Committee

From: Sarah Fischer, Director of Prevention & Promotion Services
KDADS Behavioral Health Services Commission

Date: March 9, 2016

Subject: SB 323, the Jason Flatt Act

Chairman Highland and members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 323, legislation which will require suicide prevention training for school personnel. By requiring school districts to enact suicide prevention policy, this bill can save young lives.

SB 323 helps fulfill the Kansas Suicide Prevention Plan published by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) in 2015. Specifically, Goal 2 of the plan is to “increase the prevention, intervention and management training of behavioral health, **school personnel**, and primary care professionals.”

In 2014, Kansas experienced 454 suicide deaths (15.7 per 100,000). Five of those deaths were Kansans between the ages of 5 and 14. Twenty-one other suicide victims were between 15 and 19 years old. For each of those young people who died, it is estimated that at least 115 family members, friends, members of their school communities, and others were affected. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Kansas youth aged 15 to 24.

In addition to those who died, many other young Kansans are affected by suicide risk. The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS), from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2013, reports that for Kansas youth in grades 9 through 12, during the 12 months before completing that YRBSS:

- 8.4% had made at least one suicide attempt,
- 12.5% had made a suicide plan,
- 16.4% had seriously considered suicide, and
- 24% had felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.

The Jason Flatt Act is model legislation that has been adopted in more states than any other legislative bill since 2007. Sixteen states have approved the Act to address the training of educators in suicide prevention, without fiscal impact. With just two hours of in-service training, teachers learn to recognize the warning signs and risk factors students may exhibit, to appropriately respond to those indicators and to make appropriate referrals that can significantly reduce the rate of suicide deaths.

KDADS fully supports SB 323. We appreciate the Committee’s consideration of this bill.