

November 2019

Newsletter



Message from OSSCC Board Chair

Joy Wallace, Board Chair

Since 2014 Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition has published a Safe Schools Report. This Report started out reporting on the status of school district policies related to harassment and bullying, and has evolved into a report of school safety, risks, and resiliency factors for sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth. The Safe Schools Report has become an important source of information for educators and community people about LGBTQ++ students in Oregon.

Like everyday life, unexpected things happen to non-profit organizations and this year things happened to us. Because of circumstances beyond our control, there will not be a Safe Schools Report. However, we are offering an OSSCC Newsletter, containing information and resources to support

efforts to make schools safe for all students, teachers and families (OSSCC Mission). Watch for details about the OSSCC Safe Schools Awards, designed to recognize educators who go beyond the norm to create safe environments in Oregon schools. Join us in honoring these special people. We also are looking for some new people to join the OSSCC Board of Directors. Having no staff, we are a working Board, and we expect each Board member to work on one of our major activities: Safe Schools Report; Safe Schools Awards; supporting GSAs; supporting discussions about safe schools around the state through the Task Force project; and communications efforts via our website, MailChimp, e-mail and print media. Are you ready to work with us? If yes, let us know by sending an e-mail to info@oregonsafeschools.org.

Youth Suicide in Oregon

Annette Marcus, Suicide Prevention Liaison, Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide
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In 2017 Oregon lost 107 youth, age 10 to 24, to suicide¹. When asked in the Healthy Teens Survey if they had seriously considered suicide in the past year, a sobering 17% of 8th graders answered yes. Due to stigma and discrimination, one-half of Oregon's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender 8th graders reported considering suicide. In 2017:

- Oregon experience the 17th highest youth suicide rate in the United States (15th in 2016)
- More than 750 Oregon youth ages 10 to 24 years were hospitalized for self-inflicted injury or attempted suicide
- Oregon females were far more likely to be hospitalized for suicide attempts than males.
- Final data reported 107 suicides occurred among Oregon youth aged 10 to 24 years. Most suicides occurred among males (80 percent), White (87 percent) and those aged 20 to 24 years (54 percent).
- Forty-seven of the deaths were among students ages 10 – 19.[1]

Each young person's death by suicide leaves a grieving family, friends and community. The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide is part of a movement that is galvanized to help all young people embrace life by:

- Promoting a sense of hope and highlight resilience
- Making it safe to ask for help and ensure that the right help is available at the right time
- Engaging communities in the healing process after an attempt or suicide in order to prevent contagion

In 2014, the Oregon State Legislature mandated development of a 5-year-plan to address Oregon's high rate of suicide among individuals age 10 through 24 years old. The Oregon Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan 2016-2020 (www.oregonalliancetopreventsuicide.org/ysipp) was signed by the Oregon Health Authority and submitted to the Legislature in January 2016. The next five-year plan will be developed in FY19/20.

In 2018, the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide and the University of Oregon's Suicide Prevention Lab conducted a statewide survey that assessed the current level of needs and preparedness regarding suicide prevention efforts in schools. A quarter of schools responding to the survey reported having no protocol and more than a third of respondents rated themselves uncomfortable with how to address suicide. Tellingly, the more suicide prevention programs a school had in place, the higher school staff ranked their comfort level around engaging in suicide prevention activities. While the sample of schools in the 10 Oregon counties with six or fewer people per square mile, was small, a worrisome 78% of these frontier schools reported having no programming at all in place to address suicide prevention.

Yet, the survey showed that schools are hungry for additional resources with almost 90% indicating they would like more information and support. These findings provide us with a critical glimpse into the landscape of suicide prevention in Oregon public schools. It should be noted that 70% of schools did not report their suicide prevention activities in this survey, which leaves us with the question: How are these schools addressing suicide?

[1] Oregon Health Authority. Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan Annual Report: 2018

[2] In August 2019, the Alliance and the UO Suicide Prevention Lab will release a report to schools that contains: a) a summary of the survey results, b) an overview of key areas that can be included in a suicide prevention plan, and c) a list of state and national suicide prevention resources.

Hope and Help

The need to address mental health and wellness in schools for all students was a key theme of Oregon's 2019 legislative session, with several significant pieces of legislation passed. Adi's Act (SB52) for example, requires that each school district adopt "a policy requiring a comprehensive district plan on student suicide prevention for students in kindergarten through grade 12."

The passage of the Student Success Act (HB3427), represents a significant new investment in schools, with elements that address suicide prevention and mental health promotion. The legislature additionally allocated \$10 million dollars for the biennium to OHA to support the previously unfunded Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan, as well as additional school-based mental health services.

Many Oregon schools are working to prevent suicide and promote wellness by providing evidence-based suicide prevention training to staff and students. Lines for Life reached more than 10,000 students in a classroom setting during 2018 to talk about mental wellness and suicide. Youth also are reaching out for support. Oregon's Youthline Crisis, Help and Support Line, which provides peer-to-peer crisis support, fielded more than 13,750 phone calls, texts, chats and emails from youth.

Table 3. The characteristics of youth suicides, Oregon 2017

		Deaths*	% of total
Age	10-14	10	10%
	15-19	37	36%
	20-24	56	54%
Sex	Male	82	80%
	Female	21	20%
Race**/Ethnicity	White	90	87%
	African American	5	5%
	Am. Indian/Native Alaskan	6	6%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	5	5%
	Multiple race	5	5%
	Other/Unknown	3	3%
	Hispanic	9	9%
Student status	Middle School	6	6%
	High School	28	27%
Mechanism of death	Firearm	48	47%
	Hanging/Suffocation	38	37%
	Poisoning	9	9%
	Other	8	8%
Other	Veteran	7	7%

* Four out-of-state deaths are not included because their death certificate information is not accessible.

**Includes any race (one or more, any mention) and ethnicity mention. Race categories will not sum to the total since multiple race selections could be made for each decedent.

Source: Oregon Violent Death Reporting System

Note: According to the center for health statistics, OHA, there were 107 suicides aged 10 to 24 in 2017.

Healing

How a school and community respond after a suicide or other traumatic death can promote healing and minimize the potential for contagion. Over the past biennium, fourteen counties (Columbia, Coos, Clackamas, Marion, Klamath, Lane, Linn, Benton, Deschutes, Jackson, Umatilla, Malheur, Jefferson) participated in CONNECT, the national best-practice postvention protocols developed by NAMI NH. Each of these county's has local CONNECT postvention trainers available to train school staff and community partners about how to develop an action plan based on national best practices to help reduce risk after a suicide.

Oregon is the only state to have legislation on the books addressing the need for support and information after a suicide. Known as SB561, the bill was designed to ensure that expertise in suicide, prevention, intervention and postvention is available to communities in a timely manner. It directs OHA to outline procedures for local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and allied local systems to share information within 7 days of a suspected or confirmed suicide involving individuals who are 24 years of age or younger. It also requires that each county develop a local Communication Protocol and a Suicide Response Protocol. Participation by school systems in developing these postvention plan has been highly variable. While strong partnerships exist in some counties, in others collaboration between education systems with LMHA's, public health departments and other community organizations has been minimal. This has resulted in gaps in reporting, planning and coordinated response. Schools, colleges and universities are essential partners in this process. SB485 was passed in 2019 to address this gap, and requires schools, colleges and universities to collaborate LMHA's to develop community plans for communication and response after a suicide occurs.

Resources to help prevent youth suicide:

Lines for Life: Preventing substance abuse and suicide and promoting mental wellness
Provides Youthline, Help and Support Line; Presentations to schools; Rapid Response Postvention Team;
and Consulting Youthline-a teen-to-teen crisis and help line.

Call 877-968-8491 **OR** Text teen2teen to 839863 **OR** Chat at www.oregonyouthline.org

Suicide Lifeline- Call 800-273-8255 (24/7 every day)

Text 273TALK or 839863 (8 a.m. – 11 p.m. PST)

Trevor Lifeline-LGBTQ Call 1-866-488-7386

Trevor Text: Text START to 67868

TrevorChat: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/#services>



New Resource To Keep Hate Out of Our Schools

By Jessica Acee, St. Mary's Academy, Portland, OR

Portland based organization, Western States Center, recently released a new toolkit called “Confronting White Nationalism in Schools.” It includes sample scenarios and strategies, advice and suggestions, plus a robust resource section with proactive steps and best practices, and a brief overview of the most common white nationalist groups organizing in our schools. The toolkit is available for download online at www.westernstatescenter.org/schools.

All teenagers seek a sense of identity and belonging. White nationalist organizations know this and look for ways to connect with young people in order to grow their base. They test market slang on Twitter, rewrite popular songs with white nationalist lyrics, and join mainstream video game platforms, all to reach a younger audience. “My site is mainly designed to target children,” the editor of neo-Nazi site The Daily Stormer, Andrew Anglin, said on a recent radio show appearance.

It’s easy to miss an unfamiliar white nationalist symbol, or feel unsure how to respond to a student citing a white nationalist source in the classroom. There’s a lot to keep track of when working with young people. Focused on high schools, this toolkit works best as a guide with suggestions and resources to help school communities navigate their own questions and challenges. It takes all of us to build schools where everyone feels valued, and where our students can grow to be engaged citizens of an inclusive democracy.

2018 Annual Safe School Awards

On November 17, 2018, OSSCC hosted the 7th Annual Safe Schools Awards at HEDCO Education Building at the University of Oregon. We honored 16 individuals who had shown exemplary efforts to make Oregon schools safer. Those receiving awards were:

- Lonnie and Vickie Read, Adult Allies, Pendleton PFLAG
- Mark Koopman, Adult Ally, High Desert Middle School Teacher & GSA Advisor
- Michelle McMillan, Adult Ally, Cleveland & MLC High School Career Coordinator
- Chris Synderbrown, Adult Ally, Metropolitan Learning Center
- Lavell Wood, Adult Ally, Harriet Tubman Middle School Assistant Principal
- Shannon McClure, Adult Ally, Sunnyside Environmental School Principal, PPS
- Lisa Piscotello, Adult Ally, LGBTQ+Straight Club Advisor, Brookings Harbor High School
- Aynika Nelson, Outstanding High School Student, Brookings Harbor High School
- Sabrina Achcar-Winkels, Outstanding Student, Lakeridge High School
- Dr. Olivia Murray, Adult Ally, Graduate School of Education, Portland State University
- Brita Scott, Adult Ally, GSA Advisor, La Grande High School
- Hailey Smith, Outstanding High School Student, North Bend High School
- Liv Funk, Outstanding High School Student, North Bend High School
- Nicole Kappes-Levine, Adult Ally, Program Administrator, Portland Public Schools
- Amber Reeves and Ernesto Dominquez, Adult Allies, Concordia University

OSSCC honors these people for their Safe Schools work ... all examples of what can be done in schools to make the learning environment more supportive of all students.

We have a list of new nominations who will receive a Safe Schools Award in November 2019. We will keep you posted about where and when.



2018 Safe Schools Award Winners (From left to right)

Michelle McMillan, Aynika Nelson, Liv Funk, Mark Koopman, Hailey Smith, (OSSCC sign), Nicole Kappes-Levine, Dr. Olivia Murray, Sabrina Achcar-Winkels, Lavell Wood, Amber Reeves
Front row: Shannon McClure; Ernesto Dominquez

GSA Minigrants

Lindsay Ray, OSSCC Board Member

In the Spring of 2019, OSSCC was able to award several “mini-grants” to student-led LGBTQ+ groups throughout Oregon. OSSCC funded projects across the state, from Bend to Cottage Grove to St. Helens to Portland. Projects included a variety of activities and materials to benefit LGBTQ+ youth in Oregon. Amongst those who received grants were a weekly “GSA Coffeehouse” in Independence, a Lavender Graduation for LGBTQ+ seniors at a small school in Portland, a booth at a community-wide school showcase in Turner, a LGBTQ+ Leadership Summit in Bend, and several groups wanted funds for t-shirts for community and visibility. We were thrilled to be able to provide funds for these groups and support the good work they are doing for our youth.

Oregon Department of Education Supports Safe Schools: An Update

Karin Moscon , Civil Rights Education Specialist; karin.moscon@state.or.us



The mission of the Oregon Department of Education is to foster excellence for every learner. As an organization, we value equity for every student, teacher and staff member. For students, teachers, and staff to be successful, they must be safe in their school environment.

During 2018 I was privileged to meet students and adults who are making a difference in Oregon Schools by demanding that dignity and respect are given to every person. Thank you to those that I met, and those that I did not have the privilege to meet, for the impact that you have on our schools and communities. We have made some remarkable progress this year. A Federal District Court in Portland ruled in favor of policies guaranteeing students the right to use facilities matching gender identity, and upheld our Guidance to Schools Districts. The 2018-19 school year is the first year making Oregon the first state to require a non-binary gender option to be available for students and staff in all public K – 12 schools in Oregon. Oregon Schools Activity Association has reviewed and is making changes to their athletic participation rules based on gender identity. More schools are asking for and receiving training on micro messaging, how to be trauma informed, and meeting requirements of the laws in Oregon.

Even with these strides forward, 2018 has been a tumultuous year. It may have seemed like a year of responding to endless cycles of unfolding crises internationally, nationally and even within our own state. Much of the publicity given to extremes in belief systems has resulted in an increase in reports of harassment, intimidation, and bullying in schools. There has also been an increase in reports of cyberbullying and the uses of social media for cruel comments. Some communities have seen push back on school curriculum or literature, while others found that GSAs were not allowed to operate within the same structures as other clubs. In spite of the push back, be assured that the state laws of Oregon remain steadfast in support of the rights of LGBTQIA students and staff members.

Your school is required to have a policy that prohibits discrimination, harassment, bullying, and intimidation on the basis of sex, sexual orientation (including gender identity), race, color, national origin, marital status, religion, age, and disability in any school program or activity. They must also have a policy that prohibits cyberbullying. If a student, staff member, school, or district is violating that policy, the school is required to stop the discrimination and eliminate any hostile environment that exists. If you do not feel safe in your school, please know that you do not need to face it alone. You can contact us at the Oregon Department of Education with any questions you may have about options available to you, or to find support. You will be heard and you will be taken seriously, and we will respond. Thank you to all for your courage, your talents, your voices, and all that you contribute to our Oregon Schools.

Respectfully,
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Ways to keep in touch with OSSCC:

Web: OregonSafeSchools.org

Email: info@oregonsafeschools.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/oregonsafeschools/>