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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

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( ) Action Required  
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 096-20 Student Engagement and Support

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents  
School District Superintendents  
School District Business Managers

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Coronavirus Pandemic and Mental/Behavioral Health Awareness and Supports

CONTACT: Ann Gray, Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Program Supervisor  
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## Coronavirus Pandemic and Mental/Behavioral Health Awareness and Supports

Since March 2020, school district leaders have been deeply focused on the Coronavirus Pandemic and the impact it has had on their school district, staff, and students, including their mental/behavioral health needs. Along with an explanation of the stages of crisis response, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has projected an increase in the mental/behavioral health needs of many Washingtonians during this crisis. As students and staff progress through these stages of crisis response, the addition of seasonal behavioral impacts and extended need for isolation to reduce exposure to COVID-19 may create even greater demand for student and staff supports.

In response, DOH has created a page of [resources](#) for awareness of the ongoing impact on students, staff and families, and ideas on how to support employees and students during this challenging time.

### Reminder: School District Requirements for Recognition, Screening, and Response to Emotional and Behavioral Distress

Starting in the 2014–15 school year, school districts are required to have a plan for recognition, screening, and response to emotional and behavioral distress, including but not limited to, indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, youth suicide, and sexual abuse.

OSPI's [Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention](#) webpage contains resources for school districts in their efforts to recognize and respond to emotional or behavioral distress, including a [model plan template](#), [Behavioral Health Supports and Resources](#) in responding to Coronavirus Pandemic and contact information for a Behavioral Health System Navigator at each of the nine Educational Service Districts. School districts are encouraged to review their plans and make any updates or adaptations that may be needed to support students who are engaged in remote or hybrid learning models and/or who may be experiencing increased levels of distress due to the current circumstances. There are many resources available regarding support for children and teens during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- The Washington Department of Health's [toolkit](#) for families and other caring adults provides examples of common responses based upon developmental stages and strategies that non-clinicians can employ to support young people.
- [Washington State Coronavirus Response Information for Mental and Emotional Well-being](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Building Resilience in the Workplace](#)
- [Washington Listens](#) provides free, anonymous support for people who feel sad, anxious, or stressed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Call 1-833-681-0211

Additionally, starting in 2014, School Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Nurses are required to take a Suicide Prevention Course for certification and recertification. See the Professional Educator Standards Board [webpage](#) for a list of approved trainings.

In 2020, SHB 2589 requires student and staff identification cards to include the contact information for a national suicide prevention organization and one or more campus, local, state, or national organizations specializing in suicide prevention.

- Text HEAL to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- [Mental Health Crisis Lines by County](#)

The Department of Health advises that Washingtonians should plan for the mental/behavioral health impacts from the pandemic to extend beyond the winter. Please share these resources with staff and students and prioritize supporting their well-being throughout the rest of the 20–21 school year.

## INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Ann Gray, Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Program Supervisor, at 360-725-6071 or email [ann.gray@k12.wa.us](mailto:ann.gray@k12.wa.us). The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

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