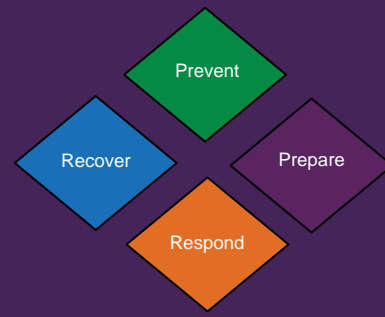


# Colorado Safe Schools

A joint publication of the Colorado School Safety Resource Center, Colorado Department of Public Safety and The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado-Boulder



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## Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention Symposium, March 3, 2011, Montrose, CO

The Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CDPS), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention (CDPHE) have partnered to co-host training symposiums for school professionals on the topics of youth suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. These symposiums were held May 2010 in Wheat Ridge and October 2010 in Highlands Ranch with over 450 participants last year.

Panels of experts, including personnel from front range school districts, presented best practice information and answered questions from participants on these most important topics. A Resource Guide for Colorado schools was distributed at the trainings and can be found on the CSSRC website at <http://safeschools.state.co.us/Resources2.html#z41>.

Thank you to Adams 12 Five Star Schools, Cherry Creek Schools, Denver Public Schools, Douglas County Schools, Colorado Society of School Psychologists (Statewide Crisis Response Team) and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office for their participation and sharing of resources with others.

The next symposium is scheduled for **March 3rd in Montrose**, using a similar format, with participation to include several local agencies from the Western Slope.

Registration is now open.

For more information or to register, please go to the CSSRC website at [www.safeschools.state.co.us](http://www.safeschools.state.co.us).

## Spotlight on Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention

A September 2010 press release from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment\* declared that 2009 marked Colorado's highest suicide rate in more than twenty years across all age groups. Colorado has an annual suicide rate that is 40% higher than the US average. More people die in Colorado by suicide than are killed in motor vehicle accidents. The Safe2Tell reporting line has also seen an increase in calls regarding suicide concerns and requests for training after a suicide of a youth in Colorado communities.

The 2009 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey\*\*, completed by a representative sample of high school students grades 9-12, revealed that approximately 25% of high school students reported feeling so sad or hopeless, almost every day for two or more consecutive weeks, that they stopped doing some of their usual activities during the past 12 months. Almost 14% of these Colorado students indicated they had seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months. Approximately 7.6% reported attempting suicide one or more times during the past 12 months. In addition, recent news stories have highlighted incidents from other parts of the country where bullying and harassment have been associated with suicide in K-12 schools and higher education institutions.

All school personnel who work with youth should be familiar with risk factors and warning signs for youth suicide, and know how to best get help for a student who may be in crisis.

### Risk factors for young people include:

- Mental health disorders
- Family history of suicide
- Previous suicide attempt
- History of trauma or abuse
- Relationship or social loss
- Easy access to lethal means
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Exposure to, including through the media, and influence of others who have died by suicide
- Barriers to health care

**"IS PATH WARM"** warning signs mnemonic created by the American Association of Suicidology, [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org):

- Ideation
- Substance abuse
- Purposelessness
- Anxiety
- Trapped
- Hopelessness
- Withdrawal
- Anger
- Recklessness
- Mood change

In addition to those signs mentioned above, additional concerns about the impulsivity of youth, possible substance use/abuse, uncertainty about the future, and the challenges and conflicts common with adolescence can increase the risk.

### What adults can do:

Schools, communities, and parents must all work together to respond to this concern for our youth. All school staff can benefit from training in the recognition of warning signs and the need to report concerns in a timely manner. In addition,

awareness training for middle and high school age youth can also lead to increased recognition of warning signs. It can also be effective in breaking the code of silence by encouraging youth to seek help for their friends. Parents should also be given information to help recognize signs of depressed or suicidal behavior to help their own children. Some helpful programs exist to assist with these types of training. Refer to the Resources for Suicide Prevention and Intervention-A Guide for Schools (compiled by CSSRC and located at <http://safeschools.state.co.us/Resources2.html#z41>).

We all can:

- Listen to youth
- Ask about suicidal thoughts, if concerns warrant
- Take concerns seriously
- Seek appropriate help for youth in crisis

### What schools can do:

- Review existing policies, procedures and training for suicide prevention.
- Additional training for staff can help to ensure use of best practices for risk assessment, for partnering with parents to provide supportive intervention plans, and for postvention following a student or staff suicide.
- Use best practice responses and interventions for youth who may be in a mental health crisis or be at-risk for suicide.
- Collaborate with community agencies and providers to determine the best available resources for crisis intervention outside of the school.

*Written in collaboration with the Office of Suicide Prevention (CDPHE).*

\* Office of Suicide Prevention, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

\*\* 2009 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/CSH\\_home.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/CSH_home.htm)

### Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) 1-800-273-TALK

**Office of Suicide Prevention (CDPHE)**  
[www.coosp.org](http://www.coosp.org) 303-692-2539

**Safe2Tell**  
<http://safe2tell.org> 719-520-7435

**Second Wind Fund, Inc.**  
[www.thesecondwindfund.org](http://www.thesecondwindfund.org) 303-988-5870

**Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide**  
<http://sptsnj.org>

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

**The Trevor Project**  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

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Contact CSPV:  
303-492-1032 or 1-866-SAFE790  
safeschools@colorado.edu  
www.colorado.edu/cspv/safeschools



Contact CSSRC:  
303-239-4435  
schoolsafetycenter@cdps.state.co.us  
www.safeschools.state.co.us

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## Colorado Safe Schools Regional Training: Resource Expo May 5-6, 2011 Vail Cascade Resort

CSPV and CSSRC invite you to a one and a half day training on the elements of safe, positive learning environments. Please join us in Vail to learn more about evidence-based practices and the resources available to your school.

### Featured Presenters Include:

- Clay Yeager, Evidence-Based Associates
- Bill Woodward, CSPV
- Randy Borum, University of South Florida
- John-Michael Keyes, I Love U Guys Foundation

### Presentations and Exhibits:

- Program Development
- Safe2Tell
- School Climate Surveys
- LifeSkills Training
- Project Towards No Drug Abuse
- CASASTART
- The Incredible Years
- Olweus Bullying Prevention

### In-depth workshops:

- Threat Assessment
- Colorado Information Sharing
- Youth Suicide & Schools
- Planning & Conducting Tabletop Exercises

**Registration:** Opens March 1 at [www.colorado.edu/cspv](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv)

**Vail Cascade Reservations:** 800-282-4183  
(mention Safe Schools for the conference rate of \$99/night)

## Help is Always Just a Call Away

In Colorado, the Safe2Tell tipline is also available to anyone who is concerned about his or her own safety or the well-being of a friend or family member. Since 2004, Safe2Tell has fielded just under 350 calls about suicidal or self-injury behavior. The most common concerns spring from family problems, break-ups, loneliness, pressures or problems at school, bullying, and depression with self-injury behaviors (typically cutting).

Tips, taken by Colorado State Patrol professionals, are routed according to the nature and severity of the situation. Common interventions include making the connection to appropriate mental health services or counselors who can evaluate the person's status and suggest the next steps for treatment or other intervention.

One recent Safe2Tell call was made on behalf of a high school boy who seemed suicidal. The caller described the boy as being a "loner" and said that he had mentioned in a text message he had a gun and "just wants to pull the trigger and get it over with." The caller's school ID card has the Safe2Tell number on the back, so he made that call to get help. Local law enforcement responded immediately and the boy was transported to the hospital for a mental health evaluation. School counselors were also informed and they created an intervention plan to discuss resources and provide support to the young man and his family.

Please remind your students and your colleagues that it is easy to make a call on behalf of someone who may be facing challenges they cannot handle alone. Safe2Tell accepts tips by phone at 877-542-SAFE or online at [safe2tell.org](http://safe2tell.org).

**safe<sup>2</sup>tell**

1-877-542-7233  
[safe2tell.org](http://safe2tell.org)