

# A QUICK GUIDE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH SUICIDAL IDEATION

Information-Gathering Protocol and Best Practices



When a student exhibits warning signs, always ask directly about suicide, such as:

- “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
- “When people are upset as you seem to be, they sometimes wish they were dead. I’m wondering if you’re feeling that way too?”

Use developmentally appropriate language to ask if the student has a plan – e.g., “Have you thought about how you would die?”



Administer your district’s Information-gathering protocol with these goals in mind:

- **Develop connection** with the student.
- **Identify warning signs and risk factors** causing suicidal thoughts.
- **Identify protective factors**, or sources of strength, that help the student through hard times.
- **Share the information gathered with parents/guardians** (hard copy is recommended over electronic to better protect confidentiality) and avoid using language like “low risk” and “high risk.” Refrain from quantifying risk. Do not minimize the risk.
- **Equip parents/guardians with local resources**, including follow-up email with phone numbers and links to crisis hotlines, local support agencies, etc.
- **Consult throughout the process** with other school-based mental health providers (e.g., school psychologist, social worker), administrator and others as applicable (e.g., nurse, school resource officer). Call CPS if applicable. Document consultation efforts.
- **Follow up as you can** and build a safety plan alongside parents/guardians, if applicable.