



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

Alabama
State Board
of Education

December 9, 2020

Governor Kay Ivey
President

MEMORANDUM

Jackie Zeigler
District I
Vice President

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education

Tracie West
District II

FROM: Eric G. Mackey *EGM*
State Superintendent of Education

Stephanie Bell
District III

RE: Survey on Attitudes and Beliefs Around Suicide Prevention

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.
District IV
President Pro Tem

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), and The University of Alabama have partnered to conduct a survey on attitudes and beliefs around suicide among students in Grades 9-12. Instructions for the facilitator on how to disseminate the survey's link are attached. Also, a copy of the questions in the survey is attached for your review.

Tommie T. Stewart, Ph.D.
District V

Participants in this survey will provide critical information for suicide prevention efforts in our schools and communities. Data will also be used by the ADPH to update the Alabama "Suicide Prevention Plan."

Cynthia McCarty, Ph.D.
District VI

If you have questions concerning the survey, please contact Dr. Karl Hamner by telephone at 205-348-0129 or by email at khamner@ua.edu. If you have questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Dr. Marilyn Lewis by email at mlewis@alsde.edu. Thank you for your cooperation regarding this survey.

Jeff Newman
District VII

EGM/ML/SB

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.
District VIII

Attachments

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
Secretary and
Executive Officer

cc: Dr. Karl Hamner
Dr. Marilyn Lewis

FY21-2032

Dear Survey Facilitator:

This letter provides directions for distributing the recently announced survey on attitudes and beliefs around suicide among students in Grades 9-12. A PDF copy of the questions being asked in the survey is attached. Responses to this survey will provide critical information for suicide prevention efforts in our schools and communities. Data will also be used by the Alabama Department of Public Health to update the Alabama's "Suicide Prevention Plan." This survey is NOT a mental health screener and does NOT ask students about their own mental health or possible suicidal behaviors. The survey is completely anonymous and will collect no identifying information about a student, their school, or district. It will be administered through an anonymous web link. Once completed, the data will be submitted directly to researchers at The University of Alabama (UA).

The link for the survey is provided below and should be provided to students to be taken between December 7, 2020, and December 18, 2020. The link will take the students directly to the survey where they will be given a chance to assent to participation. Only after assenting will they get access to the survey itself. The survey should take only between 10 to 15 minutes to complete and, once finished, answers will automatically be sent to UA researchers.

Please be sure to check for any forms from parents stating that they do not wish for their student to participate. This form was made available to schools for use with parents/guardians through the newsletter in which the survey was announced. If you have forms refusing a student's participation make sure that student's teacher is made aware so they will not be given an opportunity to take the survey and given something else to do at that time.

Please cut and past the below instruction and link to give to students. Note that the link can be accessed via cell phones, computers, and other similar electronics.

INSTRUCTIONS:

We are working with Alabama's public health and education departments to understand high school student's opinions and beliefs about suicide and suicide prevention in order to develop a new Alabama Suicide Prevention Plan. To do this, we need your help. Please use the link below to read through the assent form and, if you wish to, complete the survey.

https://universityofalabama.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cFRQj4E6BLz77Hn.

Dear Superintendent:

Please send the information below to all of your high school principals.

Dear Principal:

This letter regards directions for distributing the survey for students in Grades 9-12 attending Alabama high schools. Responses will provide the perspective of youth regarding suicide and the issues surrounding suicide and mental health. Data will be used by the Alabama Department of Public Health to update the state of Alabama's "Suicide Prevention Plan." This survey is NOT a mental health screener and DOES NOT ask students about their own mental health or possible suicidal behaviors. The survey is completely anonymous and will collect no identifying information. Furthermore, no information is gathered about a student's school or district. It will be administered through an anonymous weblink. Once completed, the data will be submitted directly to researchers at The University of Alabama (UA).

The link for the survey is provided below and should be provided to students to be taken between November 30 and December 18 of this year. The link will take the students directly to the survey where they will be given a chance to assent to the survey. Only after assenting will they get access to the survey itself. The survey should take only between 10-15 minutes to complete and once finished the answers will automatically be sent to UA researchers.

A copy of the assent form and the survey has been provided below should you wish to see it. If you have questions concerning the survey, contact Dr. Karl Hamner at 205-348-0129 or khamner@ua.edu.

If you have other questions contact Dr. Marilyn Lewis at mlewis@alsde.edu. Thank you on behalf of the Alabama Department of Public Health and The University of Alabama.

High School Student Survey Informed Assent

Please read this informed assent carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand high school student's opinions and beliefs about suicide and suicide prevention to help develop a new Alabama Suicide Prevention Plan.

What You Will Do: All public high school students in Alabama received an anonymous link to complete a web-based survey. If you agree to participate you will complete the survey here.

Time to Complete: This survey will take about 10-15 minutes to finish.

Risks: There is minimal risk associated with this study. There is a small risk of getting upset because of the subject matter.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating. The study will help us improve suicide prevention efforts in the state of Alabama and to deaths by suicide.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this survey is anonymous. Your answers are confidential and no information collected can identify you. Results will be reported for students as a group.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer. However, if you choose to not answer a question, you will have to leave the survey at that time.

Right to Withdraw: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you want to withdraw from the study, you may stop taking the survey at any time. Once your survey is completed and submitted there will be no way to withdraw your data, as it will not be identifiable from other data.

Compensation: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact: Dr. Karl Hamner, Director, Office of Evaluation Research and School Improvement, The University of Alabama College of Education at 205-348-0129 or khamner@ua.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, or would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact: Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/> email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.

I agree (1)

I do not agree (2)

1. What is your age?
 - a) 14
 - b) 15
 - c) 16
 - d) 17
 - e) 18
 - f) 19

2. What grade are you in?
 - a) 9th
 - b) 10th
 - c) 11th
 - d) 12th

3. Which of these best describes your gender?
 - a) Male
 - b) Female
 - c) Non-Binary

4. Which of these best describes your race and/or ethnicity? (choose all that apply)
 - a) Black or African American
 - b) Hispanic or Latino
 - c) White or Caucasian
 - d) Asian or Pacific Islander
 - e) Native American
 - f) Other

5. Is your parent or guardian currently or ever been in the military?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't know

6. Do you have a disability?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't know

7. Do you have an individualized education plan (IEP)?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't know

8. If you have a disability, in what category is your disability? Check all that apply.

- a) Learning Disability
- b) Emotional Behavioral Disorder
- c) Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder
- d) Physical Disability
- e) Other

9. Do you identify as a part of the LGBTQA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Asexual) community?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Questions 10-42 are all answered with the options:

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Undecided d. Disagree e. Strongly Agree.

10. You can always help a person with suicidal thoughts.

11. Suicide is never ok.

12. Dying by suicide is one of the worst things to do to a person's family.

13. After a person decides to die by suicide no one can stop them.

14. People who die by suicide are usually mentally ill.

15. It is everyone's responsibility to try to stop someone from dying by suicide.

16. When a person dies by suicide, sometimes they have considered it for a long time.

17. You can make someone suicidal if you ask about it.

18. People who make suicidal threats do not usually die by suicide.

19. People should not talk about suicide.

20. Loneliness is a good reason for suicide.

21. Almost everyone has thought about suicide.

22. I could say that I am suicidal without meaning it.

23. Suicide in young people does not make sense, because they have so much to live for.

24. When a person has suicidal thought, they never let them go.

25. Suicide happens without a warning.

26. Most people avoid talking about suicide.
27. If someone wants to take their life, it is their own business and others should not stop them.
28. People mainly die by suicide because of loneliness.
29. A suicide attempt is mostly a cry for help.
30. Overall, I do not understand how people can take their lives.
31. Family members usually do not know when a person is thinking about suicide.
32. I can help a person who is suicidal by talking to them.
33. Anyone can die by suicide.
34. People who talk about suicide do not die by suicide.
35. Most suicide attempts are caused by problems with a close friend or family member.
36. Suicide can be prevented.
37. I would tell an adult if I was suicidal.
38. I would tell an adult if a friend was suicidal.
39. I would try to talk and listen to a suicidal friend.
40. I would try to help a suicidal friend see a counselor or adult.
41. If I were depressed or suicidal, I would not go to a counselor because I would not want people to think that I am crazy.
42. If I were depressed or suicidal, I would not go to a counselor because I would not feel comfortable talking to a stranger about my problems.