

Chapter 246

(Senate Bill 310)

AN ACT concerning

Education – Youth Suicide Prevention School Program – Revisions

FOR the purpose of altering the requirements of the Youth Suicide Prevention School Program to increase pupil awareness of the relationship between gambling and youth suicide; and generally relating to the Youth Suicide Prevention School Program.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Education
Section 7–501 and 7–504
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, Researchers at the National Institutes of Health found in 2024 that rates of preteen suicide (ages 8–12) have been increasing by approximately 8% annually since 2008; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that suicide was the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10–14 and 25–34, and the third leading cause of death among individuals between 15–24; and

WHEREAS, Research out of the University of Glasgow in 2023 has shown that gambling is linked to a heightened risk of suicide attempts among young adults (ages 16–24) who experienced an increase in severity of gambling problems and were 2.74 times more likely to attempt suicide than those whose gambling was unchanged; and

WHEREAS, The first of Maryland’s six casinos opened in 2008 with slot machines, table games for casinos were approved in 2012, and sports betting has been available online and on mobile apps since 2022; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that youth gambling is increasing as 17.5% of high school students reported gambling in the last year compared to two years ago when 15.3% reported gambling; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling showed that five of seven Maryland youth focus groups mentioned advertising as one of the biggest reasons people gamble and Maryland youth are exposed to this general advertising on a consistent basis; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Youth Suicide Prevention School Program must continue to adapt to the growing challenges facing youth suicide, especially with the increased creation of conventional and online gambling in the State; and

WHEREAS, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future works to help combat youth suicide by recognizing student behavioral health issues and students experiencing trauma or violence out of school and includes ways to provide these students with behavioral health services; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

7–501.

The General Assembly finds and declares that:

(1) A statewide Youth Suicide Prevention School Program is essential to address the continuing problem of youth suicide throughout the State;

(2) The youth suicide problem often exists in combination with other problems, including drug abuse [and], alcohol use, **AND GAMBLING ADDICTION**;

(3) A SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ~~MUST~~ SHOULD PROMOTE ~~RECOGNIZE~~ RECOGNIZING STUDENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES, ~~RECOGNIZE~~ RECOGNIZING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING TRAUMA OR VIOLENCE OUT OF SCHOOL, AND ~~REFER~~ REFERRING STUDENTS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES;

[(3)] (4) A suicide prevention program for young people must emphasize a partnership between educational programs at the State and local levels and community suicide prevention and crisis center agencies;

[(4)] (5) It is of vital importance that a statewide Youth Suicide Prevention School Program be established with shared responsibility at both the State and county levels, and that this cooperation shall be a major tool in efforts to achieve the successful prevention of youth suicide; and

[(5)] (6) County suicide prevention and crisis center agencies along with local education agencies are best suited for developing and implementing programs for statewide youth suicide prevention.

7–504.

(a) (1) The Department shall adopt regulations that set eligibility guidelines for State funding of Youth Suicide Prevention School Programs under this subtitle.

(2) The regulations shall:

(i) Establish procedures for developing local programs, in cooperation with local education agencies, youth service bureaus, and community mental health centers; and

(ii) Establish standards and policies for programs to offer:

1. Individual, family, and group counseling related to youth suicide prevention;

2. Referral, crisis intervention, and information for students, parents, and school personnel; and

3. Training for school personnel, and others responsible for counseling or supervising student activities.

(b) A Youth Suicide Prevention School Program established under this subtitle shall plan, fund, and implement educational programs, which may include any of the following:

(1) Classroom instruction designed to achieve any of the following objectives:

(i) Encourage sound decision making and promote ethical development;

(ii) Increase pupils' awareness of the relationship between drug and alcohol use, **GAMBLING**, and youth suicide;

(iii) Teach pupils to recognize signs of suicidal tendencies, and other facts about youth suicide;

(iv) Inform pupils of available community youth suicide prevention services;

(v) Enhance school climate and relationships between teachers, counselors, and pupils; and

(vi) Further cooperative efforts of school personnel and community youth suicide prevention program personnel;

(2) School or community based alternative programs outside of the classroom, including:

- (i) Positive peer group programs;
 - (ii) A 24-hour “hotline” telephone service, staffed by trained professional counselors;
 - (iii) Programs to collect data on youth suicide attempts;
 - (iv) Intervention and follow-up;
 - (v) Mental health programs to promote mental health awareness and encourage pupils to seek help as soon as it is needed; and
 - (vi) Parent education and training programs; and
- (3) Teacher training programs.

(c) Any program established under this subtitle shall:

- (1) Assist in increasing the awareness, among school personnel and community leaders, of the incidence of teenage suicide;
- (2) Train school personnel in individual and schoolwide strategies for teenage suicide prevention;
- (3) Develop and implement school-based teenage suicide prevention programs and pilot projects;
- (4) Develop and implement school-based pilot mental health programs and peer-to-peer support to address the needs of students suffering from mental illness; and
- (5) Through cooperative efforts, utilize community resources in the development and implementation of teenage suicide prevention programs under this subtitle.

(d) The Department may assist local school systems in implementing pilot peer-to-peer mental health awareness programs.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor, May 6, 2025.