



RESEARCH IMPACT SUMMARY

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Evidence-Based Guidance for Implementing School-Based Suicide Prevention Programs

Researchers provide evidence-based guidance to help school authorities identify and implement school-based mental health and suicide prevention programs

Mental health disorders and suicide among youth are a cause of concern worldwide. In the U.S., the STANDUP Act seeks to address the mental health crisis by providing necessary funding support for school-based mental health awareness and suicide prevention programs. In this review, researchers provide evidence-based data on 12 such programs eligible under the STANDUP Act. These findings can serve as a comprehensive guide for identifying and implementing interventions to tackle the mental health crisis.

Adolescent suicide and associated mental health challenges continue to remain major public health concerns globally. In the United States (U.S.), suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death among youth aged 10 to 18. The mental health crisis among youth in the U.S. is further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had an unprecedented impact on people's lives. Recent data is particularly alarming, revealing a 25% increase in reported suicide attempts between 2011 and 2021 in the U.S.

Acknowledging the fact that schools can provide a favorable opportunity for increasing the mental health awareness among adolescents, policies like the Suicide Training and Awareness Nationally Delivered for Universal Prevention (STANDUP) Act were enacted. The Act seeks to help educational and tribal agencies avail funding and resources for implementing school-based suicide prevention programs. However, for the successful implementation of this Act, schools must be equipped with actionable evidence about the programs that qualify for funding under the Act. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies exploring the eligibility of school-based suicide prevention programs under the STANDUP Act.

In a recent [study](#) published in the *Archives of Suicide Research* journal, researchers examined evidential reports from 12 school-based suicide prevention programs reported across 29 studies. As Dr. Landon B. Krantz, the corresponding author of this paper explains, *"We wanted to create a review specifically designed to equip school officials with expert, evidence-graded assessments of mental health programs that they can implement right now in U.S. schools. Hence, we evaluated an entire body of evidence for each program through the LEGEND (Let Evidence Guide Every New Decision) system, ensuring a comprehensive view of program efficacy."* Dr. Krantz is a pediatrician and researcher at the Division of General and Community Pediatrics of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.



In this review, the researchers identified that students who participated in such school-based suicide prevention programs demonstrated significant positive outcomes. These include heightened awareness about suicide, increased knowledge around suicide risk factors, improved aptitude for seeking help when faced with emotional distress, and reduction in suicidal behaviors. Notably, two programs—the Youth Aware of Mental Health and Adapt for Life—stood out for their evidence in addressing all four outcomes. The Signs of Suicide program emerged as a potent tool in mitigating suicidal behaviors, particularly among middle school students. Additionally, the review ascertained the eligibility of the selected programs for federal funding under the STANDUP Act. This included the availability of readily available training and implementation materials in English to facilitate their usability in U.S. schools.

The review outlines specific protocols that can be adopted within a school curriculum for identification of at-risk groups. It also provides valuable insights regarding the costs and time involved with each program, demographics that the programs were administered on, and varied outcomes achieved. This holistic understanding can empower schools to make informed decisions on program selection, help them secure federal funding, and effectively implement the chosen program. *“The STANDUP Act is one of many opportunities for schools to obtain funds for tackling the mental health crisis among youth. With the evidence-based data presented in our review, along with the required time and materials for each program that we summarized, we urge schools to make the most of this paper to deliver evidence-based suicide prevention programming to their students,”* says Dr. Krantz.

Going ahead, the researchers encourage school administration and social workers to utilize this data for creating a holistic, inclusive, and healthy atmosphere within the school premises. They also urge school administrations to initiate active discussions on the feasibility and relevance of these programs and how they can be best implemented to serve the needs of their student body.

In conclusion, this evidence-based review underscores schools' potential to act as vanguards against the escalating challenge of mental health in youth. With the implementation of such evidence-backed initiatives, educational institutions can proactively contribute to charting a trajectory towards resilient and mentally healthy future.

Reference

Authors	^{1,2} Landon B. Krantz , ¹ Danette Stanko-Lopp, ³ Matt Kuntz, and ² Holly C. Wilcox
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Caption: Findings of this review can help school authorities implement school-based mental health programs for reducing adolescent suicides and addressing mental health challenges

Picture courtesy: [Pixabay](#)

About Dr. Landon B. Krantz

Dr. Landon Krantz is a researcher and physician specializing in general pediatrics and adolescent mental health. Dr. Krantz is currently an academic research fellow at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in the Division of General & Community Pediatrics and is completing a Masters of Health Sciences in maternal child health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. He is interested in improving upstream interventions around youth mental health to reduce mental health crises in the long run. Over the course of his career, he has been awarded the Alumni Award by Cincinnati Children's Alumni Association, the Joseph L. Rauh Adolescent Medicine Award, and many others. His areas of interest include suicide prevention, school health, and public health.