



SALEM•KEIZER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

How Do You Recover When Teens Die by Suicide?

Oct. 18, 2019



Sept. 16, 2018

Sprague High Freshman Ben McMann Died by Suicide





Oct. 4, 2018



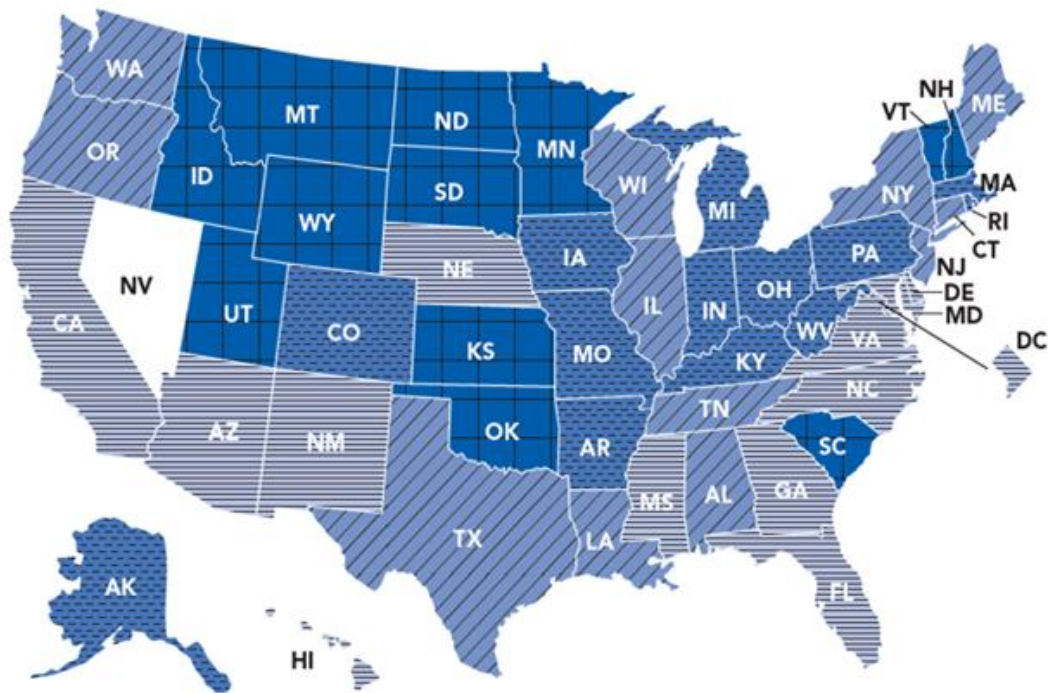
Sprague High Junior Aaron Brown Died by Suicide

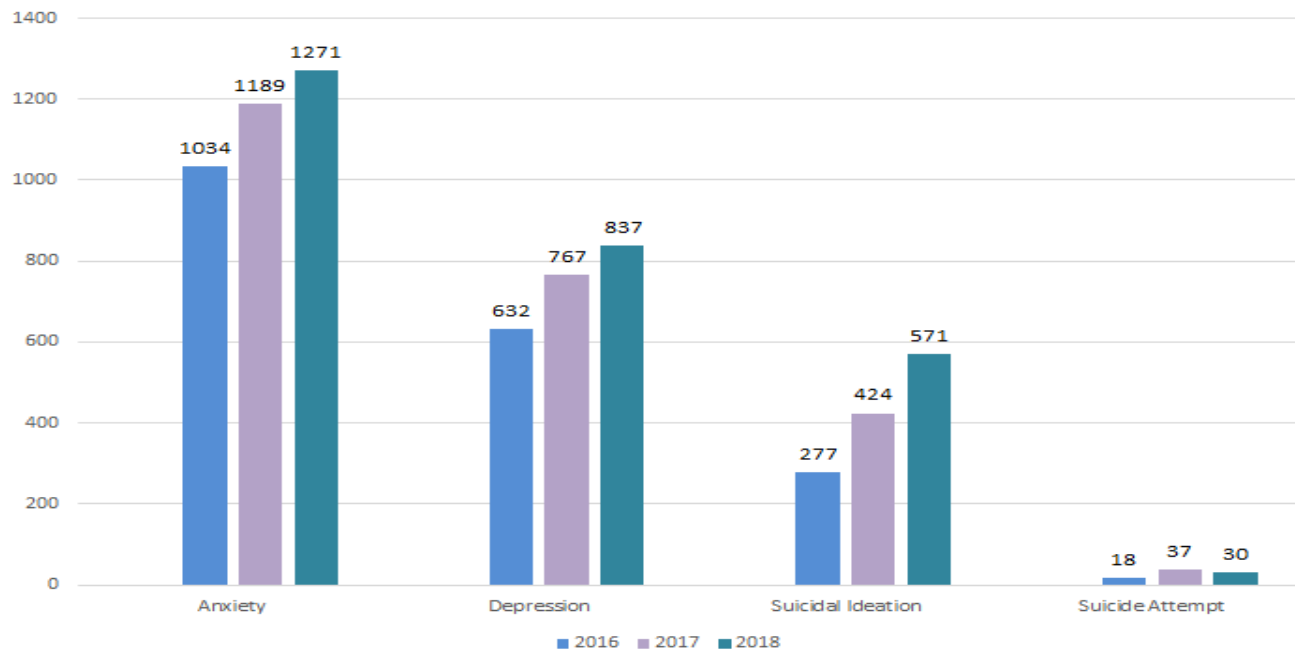


Suicide rates rose across the US from 1999 to 2016.



SOURCE: CDC's National Vital Statistics System;
CDC Vital Signs, June 2018.





Diagnosis code encounters for patients ages 9-24 seen in SHED and WVED





Since Aaron died...

- Had a serious suicide threat reported to while at Aaron's funeral that required police intervention
- SKPS middle school teacher dies by suicide
- Student at nearby Jefferson High dies by suicide on baseball field during the school day
- SKPS middle school student dies by suicide
- SKPS high school student dies by suicide
- Two elementary students attempt suicide at school in separate events



How do we communicate?

- Assess the speed with which the information will become public, timing is everything!
- Collaborate with law enforcement, what can be shared, what is to remain confidential?
- Rely on best practices - inside-out communications (notify your Board!)
- Engage staff – how do we tell them? Are they in a place where they can share with students?
Give staff a chance to process what they will have to share.



How do we communicate?

- Where are grief counselors? What size of room should you start with and vary from day-to-day?
- How are we engaging parents in the process?
- What supports are in place for employees moving forward?
- How do we ensure supports are in place after the initial rush of emotions fade?
- Are there other schools/programs impacted? How are they being notified?



Be Careful About

- Announcing everything on a PA system at one time – the adults need time to figure out how to support students
- Holding an assembly to tell kids
- Not letting parents be parents
- Sharing information that's not your story to tell (how they died)



Change Tactics Based on Logistics

First student suicide: 10 a.m. Saturday - had all weekend. Called teachers personally. Parents didn't want it acknowledged as a suicide, died because she was "mentally ill"

Ben McMann: 9 p.m. on Sunday - meeting first thing in the a.m.

Aaron Brown: 11 a.m. on a Thursday - 1.5 days of intense grieving at the school, followed by community-led session at the school over the weekend

Jefferson High – in lockdown for four hours before communicating

Consistent response critical - think about favoritism, popularity, perceptions





Create a Space for the Community to Grieve

Speak Up! Preventing Teen Suicide

If you are the parent or guardian of a teenager, it can be scary to talk to them about suicide. On Wednesday, Oct. 17, representatives from a number of local mental health partners will be available to have a community dialogue about how to prevent suicide.

Where: Sprague High Commons Area

When: 5-7 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 15

Dinner will be provided for all who attend. The program is appropriate for children 14 and older. Free childcare also will be offered.





Create a Space for Staff to Grow

- Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training for all staff
- Develop an avenue for kids to communicate with at least one trusted adult - kids know more about themselves or peers - adults know how to access supports
- Staff meetings changed from focus on instruction to focus on social and emotional learning
- Be in hallways during class changes, start conversations



Create a Space for Students to Connect

- Charge staff with increasing student connections
- Students led collective thinking on how to make a difference
- Even simple signs and bracelets made a difference
- Licensed therapists at 29 schools
- Added one counselor per traditional high school
- LGBTQ Pride Month Proclamation
- Curriculum that teaches:
 - Safe and healthy choices and coping strategies
 - How to recognize risk factors and warning signs
 - Help-seeking strategies





Create a Space for the Community to Learn

LEARNING FOR A LIFETIME
SALEM•KEIZER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Speak Up! Preventing Teen Suicide

WEDNESDAY
MAY 15, 2019

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
4071 WINEMA PLACE NE
SALEM, OR 97305

5 PM,
DINNER

5:30
PROGRAM BEGINS

Talking to your children about suicide isn't easy.

Join SKPS and area mental health professionals for a listening session and focus group to help identify strategies that facilitate conversations with loved ones and young people about mental health. Spanish interpretation, free dinner and childcare will be provided.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Phone: 1-800-273-8255 | suicidepreventionlifeline.org
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Thank you to our partners:





Continue to Foster Relationships with Parents of Deceased Students



- Visit the family, encourage other stakeholders to visit
- Partner with them to campaign for prevention
- Contacted them when other suicides have occurred so they are prepared for news reports
- Staff member who lost son, principal had lunch once a week for rest of year



Continue to Elevate the Conversation

Salem-Keizer suffers alarming number of suicides, makes preventative changes

by Genevieve Reaume, KATU News | Thursday, February 28th 2019



Ben McMann.



SALEM, Ore. — Since February 2018, five students within the Salem-Keizer School District have died by suicide.

Four of those five suicides have happened this school year. In the fall, two students from Sprague High School took their lives just weeks apart. The other two suicides were at a different high school and a middle school.





Create Policy/Workflow to Help Support Employees

Ensure appropriate processes for:

- Intervention
- Assessment
- Re-Entry
- Postvention
- Parent Notification

Comply with Senate Bill 52 – Adi's Act





For More Information/Support:
<https://tinyurl.com/y4ht8l82>

- Suicide Prevention Town Hall Information
- Templates of communications
- swanson_craig@salkeiz.k12.or.us
- govus_lillian@salkeiz.k12.or.us
- 1-800-273-TALK

Salem-Keizer Public Schools



**Our Vision:
All students graduate
and are prepared for a successful life**