

# NEWS



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## **Ohio Mandates Suicide Prevention Programs in State-Funded Schools**

All Ohio public school systems personnel will soon be trained in Suicide Prevention thanks to a new law beginning in late March of this year. House Bill 543 -- the "Jason Flatt Act" -- requires schools to educate their staff in youth suicide awareness and prevention as a part of in-service training. Sponsored by State Rep. Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills), the legislation is named after Jason Flatt, who died by suicide 15 years ago. His father, Clark, founded The Jason Foundation with the goal of saving lives by raising awareness about youth suicide. Ohio joins 10 other states that have passed the Act.

HB 543 was unanimously passed by both the Ohio House and Senate, and Governor Kasich signed it on December 20, 2012. The final version can be found online at [www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills). (The underlined portions are the HB 543 revisions.) According to the Secretary of State website, these revisions to Ohio Revised Code 3319.073 will be effective March 22, 2013.

"We are so grateful to the Ohio Legislators and the Governor for this measure to prevent youth suicide. Early identification of warning signs and linkage to proper mental health care is key. Therefore, it is essential that individuals who interact with youth daily be trained on the proper questions to ask and how to intervene. The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties (SPC) stands ready to assist any local school district create and implement training for their staff," stated Patti Ahting, Coalition Chair.

SPC offers various training programs on this topic. Kognito's *At-Risk for High School Educators* program would be a viable option for high schools to fulfill this training requirement. All Warren and Clinton County high schools have received information on this free program. For elementary and middle school educators, programs such as Signs of Suicide (SOS) and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) are available. The Suicide Prevention Coalition offers these programs and is prepared to assist local schools with this training requirement. For more information, contact Ahting at 513-695-1695 or email [pahting@mhrswcc.org](mailto:pahting@mhrswcc.org) or visit SPC's website online at [www.mhrsonline/suicidepreventioncoalition](http://www.mhrsonline/suicidepreventioncoalition).

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