

NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free Suicide Prevention Training available for Ohio High School Staff

The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties is partnering with the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) in promoting a statewide effort to increase the number of high school educators trained to take a more active role in identifying, addressing and motivating help-seeking among students exhibiting signs of psychological distress. The program gives Ohio high schools free access to a new innovative online training simulation that engages teachers and staff in virtual practice conversations, similar to a video game.

The bold goal of training 20,000 of Ohio's educators is just one part of OSPF's 3-year "Campaign for Hope - Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative funded by a \$1.4 million in funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Currently only 5% or less of high school staff across the state are trained suicide prevention gatekeepers. This effort aims to bring that proportion up to 50% or more, meaning that one of every two adults in the building is trained to recognize students in distress and motivate them to seek help.

OSPF has licensed this innovative tool, Kognito's *At-Risk for High School Educators*, which is based on **cutting edge educational gaming technology** that uses online role-playing simulations with emotionally responsive avatars to teach high school teachers what to look for, how to talk to students who exhibit signs of psychological distress, and when and how to refer them for professional services. A demo of the technology can be viewed at <http://highschool.kognito.com/ohio> under the "about" tab.



“We are pleased to assist OSPF in marketing this innovative program to the local school districts. It provides an unique opportunity for high school staff to participate in a very worthwhile training which is available 24 hours a day and is at no cost to the schools” stated Patti Ahting, Chair of the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Warren and Clinton Counties. “This is particularly crucial as there has been a considerable increase in youth suicides in Warren and Clinton Counties in the last two years. Often these youth aren’t identified as at-risk due to displaying only subtle warning signs. This training focuses on how to recognize students in psychological distress, how to effectively communicate with them, and how to refer them on to professional help.”

Year	Number of Youth Deaths by Suicide (age 21 or younger, Warren & Clinton Counties)
2002	1
2003	2
2004	3
2005	0
2006	1
2007	1
2008	1
2009	0
2010	4
2011	4

Source: Death Certificates - Warren County Health Department; Clinton County Health Department

Ahting indicated that all school superintendents in Warren and Clinton Counties have been invited to enroll their high schools in this free training.

For further information, contact:

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