



# The Jed Foundation (JED) Policy Platform

The Jed Foundation

The Jed Foundation (JED) supports policies that advance a comprehensive approach to promoting mental health and preventing suicide, particularly for ages 13-30, such as those that:

## Improve attitudes and behaviors

- Equip families, school administrators, teens, and young adults with the skills, tools, and knowledge to navigate emotional and mental health challenges while strengthening attitudes and behaviors related to teen and young adult mental health

## Improve programs

- Incorporate and fund comprehensive suicide prevention and mental health programs for high school and higher education institutions

## Improve environments

- Create environments that are safe, inclusive, positive, and supportive of the mental health of all teens and young adults

## KNOWLEDGE

### Awareness

Raise awareness of suicide risks, prevention, and initiatives to promote positive mental health, such as:

- Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
- Suicide Prevention Hotlines and Other Prevention Services
- Campaigns that destigmatize mental health conditions and encourage help-seeking behavior
- The Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention for High Schools; and for Colleges and Universities; or other related adaptations

### Gatekeeper training

- Support required training and regular refreshers for school staff (academic and non-academic), particularly those with regular contact with students with a higher risk of suicide.
  - Ensure that the training includes how to identify early warning signs of mental health struggles among students.
- Ensure adequate numbers of trained and supported school counselors, social workers, and other frontline mental health professionals for teens and young adults.
- Provide training of academic and non-academic staff to meet the diverse needs of the student population.

## Research

Fund research efforts focused on promoting mental health and suicide prevention in teens and young adults.

# PROGRAMS

## Comprehensive school planning, policies, and programs that include mental health and suicide prevention

- Encourage schools to consider various health and wellness aspects, particularly mental health and suicide prevention, when developing school policies and initiatives, such as
  - Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model
  - Trauma-Informed & Restorative Practices
  - Culturally Competent Care
- Promote and increase federal funding opportunities for mental health and suicide prevention, such as:
  - Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education), a SAMSHA grant that can be used for infrastructure, services, and suicide prevention training of school personnel and students
  - Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Suicide Prevention Program, a SAMSHA grant that provides funding for states, territories, tribal entities, and institutions of higher education for suicide prevention efforts including education, training, screening, and infrastructure development.

## Preparatory and transition programs

Provide assistance for students to prepare for the transitions from middle school to high school, high school to college/career, and college to career, such as:

- Federal TRIO programs that help those from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs
- GEAR UP, a federal program to increase early college awareness, readiness, and success for low-income and historically underrepresented students

## After-school and community programming

Include mental health and/or suicide prevention as part of after-school programming support, such as through the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC).

## Inclusive peer programming and student input

- Expand culturally responsive peer support for teens and young adults through mentorship, empowerment, social connectedness, and education on how to support each other.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for teens and young adults with mental health conditions and other risk factors to provide input/guidance on ways to improve practices.

### Access to mental health care

Ensure teens and young adults have adequate and equitable access to general, crisis, and long-term mental health care. This includes:

- Ensuring the availability of trained and culturally responsive professionals to conduct mental health evaluations, deal with mental health crises, and provide referrals for further professional services. College campuses should have mental health counselors proportional to the number of students on campus to ensure adequate access, as well as a triage system to respond to student needs.
- Addressing disparity of adverse mental health outcomes and affordability of health care plans.

### Programs focusing on groups at higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes

Recognize that there are teens and young adults who hold identities from populations that are statistically at higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes and thus ensure that culturally responsive support is provided. It is imperative to develop preventive programs that create safe spaces, mentorship, empowerment, and connectedness for the needs of vulnerable groups, including but not limited to:

- [Gender non-conforming](#) teens and young adults
- [LGBTQ+](#) teens and young adults
- [BIPOC](#) teens and young adults
- [American Indian/Alaska Native](#) teens and young adults
- Teens and young adults with [learning differences](#), including pre-existing mental health conditions

## ENVIRONMENTS

### Accommodations

Ensure safe, supportive, and positive accommodations are provided in schools for teens and young adults with mental health and learning differences to excel academically, socially, and emotionally.

### Social connectedness

- Encourage the development of support structures for all students, such as supportive social relationships and connectedness to campus, family, and friends to help address unique health and wellness needs/concerns.
- Promote an overall comprehensive approach that prioritizes a culture of caring and compassion on campus.

### Disciplinary actions

- Ensure that disciplinary actions are not in response to inappropriately addressed and accommodated mental health conditions, and when there are disciplinary actions taken, that potential mental health causes/consequences are evaluated to ensure that they are adequately addressed.

- Disciplinary policies should be mindful of student mental health and reintegration needs by providing training for school administrators on restorative practices, social-emotional learning programming, etc.

### **Violence: sexual harassment/bullying/hazing/etc.**

Address the prevention and response to various forms of violence potentially experienced by teens and young adults, whether in school, family related, in the community, or even self-inflicted.

### **Firearm safety**

Raise awareness of the connection between firearms and the high rates of suicides in the United States. There should be sensible regulations to reduce access to firearms by those at risk of attempting suicide, including but not limited to:

- Barring firearms on college campuses
- Requiring firearms be secured
- Removing firearms from the house or making sure they are secure if a household member has a mental health disorder

### **Health and wellness**

Equip teens and young adults with life skills and tools to help them navigate adulthood and fulfill their potential in the following areas (but not limited to):

- Nutrition
- Physical health
- Emotional health/stress management
- Career/work
- Financial security
- Housing security
- Relationship management--families, peers, etc.