# Superintendent’s Memo #235-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: September is Suicide Prevention Month

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) joins the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to recognize that September is Suicide Prevention Month.

While suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people, ages 10-24, it is also preventable. During these times of uncertainty and social remoteness due to COVID-19, many individuals are feeling additional stress and are struggling to cope with their emotions. It has become even more imperative to recognize the need to be there for others and to take steps to prevent suicide.

Since student mental health affects performance in school, it is important to promote a safe, supportive and caring school environment for all students. Whether local school divisions are serving students in virtual instruction, in-person instruction, or a hybrid model, schools and classrooms can create connectedness among students and promote emotional well-being both of which contribute to a positive school climate. Refer to the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center's (SPRC) resources for schools](https://www.sprc.org/settings/schools) for additional information.

To bring awareness to suicide prevention, the VDH developed a [Suicide Prevention Toolkit,](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/suicide-prevention/)whichincludes educational materials and print-ready social media communication templates that schools can use. The VDOE continues to promote and provide resources and learning opportunities related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

The [VDOE Suicide Prevention Resources](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/suicide/index.shtml) webpage offers information about prevention, warning signs, and responding to and supporting students in crisis. The site includes a link to the newly adopted ([Suicide Prevention Guidelines for Virginia Public Schools](https://padlet-uploads.storage.googleapis.com/688242815/c52679f58fe478268bfd12234689a976/FINAL_SUICIDE_PREVENTION_GUIDEBOOK.pdf)) as well as resources for educators, parents, and students. Please visit [GovDelivery.com](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VADOE/subscriber/new) to receive updates from VDOE and subscribe to the [Office of Student Services Newsletter](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VA_OSS) for a special edition in early September focusing on Suicide Prevention.

Questions regarding suicide prevention may be directed to Martha Montgomery, School Psychology Specialist, by email at Martha.Montgomery@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 692-0396.

JFL/MM/rge