

“An Act to Increase Suicide Awareness and Prevention in Maine Public Schools” Frequently Asked Questions 2022

LD 609 was signed into law in 2013 following unanimous passage in the legislature. The law requires:

- all public-school staff in Maine to complete a 1-2 hour Suicide Prevention Awareness Session
- Each school districts to have at least two staff trained as suicide prevention Gatekeepers
- Each school district to develop and implement administrative protocols and procedures detailing how they will implement suicide prevention and intervention activities as well as how they will support the needs of their school community in the event of a suicide loss.

Who needs to attend the Awareness Training?

All school personnel and anyone receiving a check from a public school as a regular staff must receive Suicide Prevention Awareness Training. This includes, but is not limited to: administrators, teachers, support staff, custodians, bus drivers, duty monitors, coaches, and cafeteria workers. In addition, it is recommended that volunteers working in schools receive the training.

Who can train the staff?

The Maine Suicide Prevention Program provides training to those who have completed their Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper workshop to prepare a person to provide the 1-2 hour Suicide Awareness Training sessions in their community. *Training of Trainers* is offered around the state at a variety of locations. Once a person has completed the Gatekeeper training and the Training of Trainers and shows competence, they are able to provide the Awareness Training to fulfill LD 609. The Maine Suicide Prevention Program and NANI Maine have developed an online version of the Awareness Presentation to be used for staff unable to attend the in-person presentation.

The DOE will post information of acceptable trainings on their website.

How many people need to be Gatekeeper trained?

Each school administrative unit is required to have a minimum of two personnel trained as Suicide Prevention Gatekeepers. For school administrative units with more than 1000 students, for every additional 500 students an additional Gatekeeper is required by the law. The recommendation is to have a Gatekeeper trained person per school building. A school may choose to have more than the minimum number.

How long is training valid?

Both trainings need to be renewed every five years. New hires need to receive suicide prevention awareness education within six months of hire. Staff needing to renew their Gatekeeper Training may repeat the basic training, complete the Advanced Gatekeeper Training for School Personnel or, for clinical staff, complete a Suicide Assessment Training for School Personnel.

Is there funding available to help with the cost of training?

At this time trainings offered through the Maine Suicide Prevention Program are free for participants. Schools are expected to use existing professional development funds to fulfill this requirement. Costs should be minimal given the availability of training and the reasonability to offer the training during existing in-service days or regularly scheduled staff meetings.

Who does the school district report to?

School districts have until 2016 to have staff trained. If school districts participate in training before a formal system is in place, it will be critical to keep clear records. The Department of Education will establish a system for tracking compliance.

If you have more questions about the law and its implementation, contact the Department of Education (207) 624-6600. For information about specific training programs, contact the Suicide Prevention team at NAMI Maine mspp@namimaine.org or 1-800-464-5767 or 207-622-5767. Information on MSPP training opportunities can be found at www.namimaine.org

