

# Student Suicide: Mental Health and Legal Response

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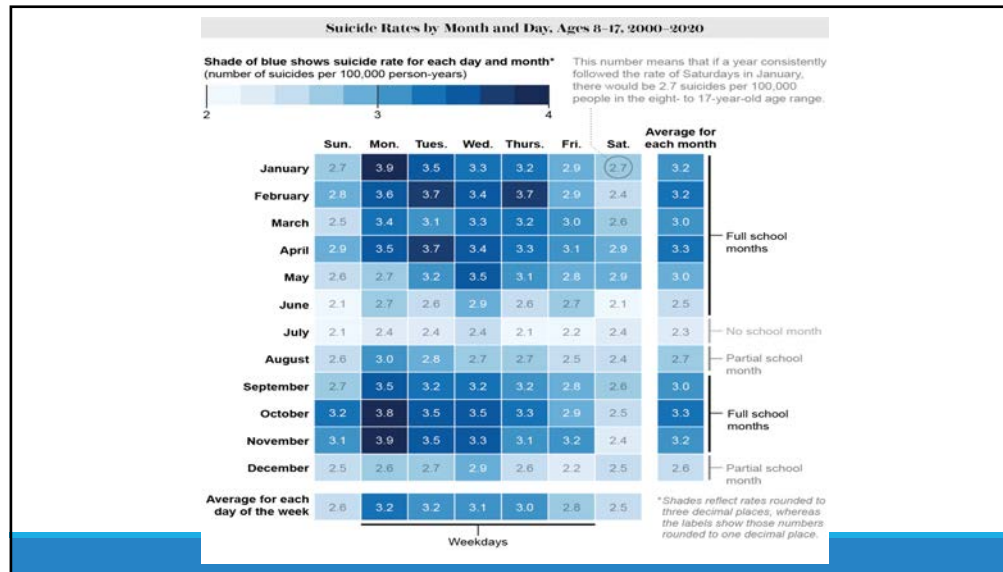
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## Student Suicide on the Rise

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- Sobering statistics nationwide
- Increasingly likely for very young students
- Suicides more likely during the school year

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## Outcries

- Outcries differ, especially given student age
  - Younger students may lack vocabulary to identify feelings
- Outcry may not be made to teacher or counselor
  - Critical to train all staff on campus to recognize and respond to outcries
  - A “trusted adult” for every student
- Outcry may not be specific to suicide
  - Some courts deem repeated reports of bullying to suffice

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## Suicide Contracts

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- Controversial practice – not recommended
- Little empirical evidence supports contracts as effective tools to prevent suicide.
- Use of a suicide contract implies that the school counselor will ensure the student's safety, or of a binding agreement generally.
- Suicidal person is often not competent to sign a contract.
- Use of such suicide contracts may open district up to liability it could have otherwise avoided.

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## Student Privacy & Reporting Requirements

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- District staff = professional reporters of abuse under TEC
  - 48 hours from when reasonably suspected abuse/neglect
- Counseling staff have additional ethical requirements
  - Generally, counselors required to keep confidentiality
  - Risk of harm trumps confidentiality

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Title search: Student Suicide: Mental Health and Legal Response

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38<sup>th</sup> Annual School Law Conference session

"Student Suicide: Mental Health and Legal Response"