

CHAPTER 168

AN ACT concerning suicide prevention programs at institutions of higher education and amending P.L.2016, c.18.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 2 of P.L.2016, c.18 (C.18A:3B-73) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:3B-73 Institution of higher education required to provide access to suicide prevention services; training for faculty and staff provided.

2. a. An institution of higher education shall have individuals with training and experience in mental health issues who focus on reducing student suicides and attempted suicides available on campus or remotely by telephone or other means for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Individuals with training and experience in mental health issues shall also work with, and annually train, faculty and staff on ways to recognize the signs of depression and the warning signs and risk factors associated with student suicide, and on the referral of students to crisis hotlines and mental health screenings.

b. No later than 15 days following the beginning of each semester, an institution of higher education shall transmit to each student via electronic mail the contact information of the individuals required pursuant to subsection a. of this section.

An institution of higher education may satisfy this requirement by providing each student with the hotline number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the NJ Hopeline, or any 24/7 mental health hotline deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Higher Education. In addition to providing students with the hotline numbers, the institution shall post the hotline numbers in each dormitory, library, and student center, and any other facility or area on campus that the institution determines to be appropriate.

c. A four-year institution of higher education shall require all students who serve as resident assistants to receive annual training on the signs of depression, the warning signs and risk factors associated with college student suicide, the referral of students to campus mental health resources, and responding to students in crisis. The training shall be developed by a licensed mental health professional with experience in treating depression in college students.

d. An institution of higher education shall annually conduct a mental health public awareness campaign on campus designed to:

- (1) provide students with information on depression and suicide;
- (2) raise awareness about the mental health services available on and off campus; and
- (3) reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health services.

e. The president of an institution of higher education, or a designee, shall establish a mental health crisis assessment and response plan. The purpose of the plan shall be to act as the official protocol to be used by campus staff, faculty, and resident assistants in the case of four-year institutions, to identify, assess, and respond to a student who is experiencing a mental health crisis. The plan shall include an assessment, every five years, of elements of the campus environment that might be used in a suicide attempt including, but not limited to: access to building rooftops, balconies, windows, and bridges; access to toxic substances including chemicals in campus laboratories; and access to drugs, alcohol, controlled dangerous substances, and firearms.

f. No campus staff member, faculty member, or resident assistant at an institution of higher education shall be held liable for any good faith act or omission consistent with the provisions of this section. For purposes of this section, good faith shall not include willful misconduct, gross negligence, or recklessness.

2. This act shall take effect in the first full academic year next following the date of enactment.

Approved October 19, 2023.