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Free ‘Gatekeeper’ training helps Idahoans respond to youth suicide warning signs

(BOISE) – September is Suicide Prevention Month, and the State Department of Education (SDE) is marking the occasion by encouraging Idahoans to sign up for free online training designed to prevent youth suicide.

The SDE has secured licenses to train 10,000 people in QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer) Gatekeeper Training. The training takes an estimated hour to two hours to complete, and interested individuals can [apply online](#).

“Anyone who interacts with students – teacher, parent, administrator, school staff, volunteer, grandparent, coach – is encouraged to sign up for this training, which provides important understanding and strategies for just a small investment of time,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said.

“Reducing Idaho’s teen suicide rate, providing preventive services and supporting students’ social and emotional health are priorities for my department and for educators and families throughout our state,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “For schools, this is a great opportunity to provide staff and volunteers with the suicide prevention and intervention training the Legislature mandated in 2018.”

As part of a safety gap analysis last year, the SDE asked 450 educators across Idaho whether they had ever received suicide prevention training, and about half of those surveyed said they had not. That information motivated efforts to make QPR Gatekeeper training widely available.

In the most recent Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey, about 22 percent of surveyed students said they had seriously considered attempting suicide, the highest level in 10 years. And more students reported feeling sad or hopeless (39 percent) than at any time in the past decade.

“Caring adults are key to helping students deal with social-emotional issues and suicidal thoughts,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “We want to prepare as many people as possible to connect students with needed support and resources.”

Licenses for the QPR Gatekeeper training are offered through the SDE's Idaho Lives project, a collaboration with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA includes the training on its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

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