



Keys for Networking, Inc.

Kansas Parent Information and Resource Center • www.keys.org

The State Organization of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

July 19, 2018

Dr. Jennifer Schmidt
Dr. Andy Tompkins
Attorney General's Task Force on Suicide Prevention
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Drs. Tompkins, Schmidt and Others:

I attended the Task Force Meeting in the Shawnee County Library. I am writing to urge you to extend your deliberations to include and/or emphasize what happens when a parent or a school person sees the warning signs, recognizes them as significant. All the presenters seemed to agree on the warning signs but not one person proposed what to do, where to go, how to refer or connect the youth with meaningful help from education, mental health, and or substance abuse providers.

I urge you to focus on this part of the issue of getting meaningful help quickly, and locally. This is almost impossible in 2018. These children/adolescents end up in emergency rooms where they are tended to by security guards, hospital social workers who are not trained to manage children with these needs—the care they receive removes them of all power to make decisions, to act at all. They are restrained physically and chemically. Should they go to an acute hospital or Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility, there may or may not be connections made with the school. Rarely does anyone take the time to explain to parents why signing releases is helpful to their child. Even more rarely does anyone take the time to help parents resolve issues when they are reluctant to sign releases.

Will you include parents, youth as stakeholders, perhaps in a private meeting with the committee? Many people especially youth, are reluctant to share their story, express their needs in front of neighbors, friends in a community where they live. Keys will offer your resources to help you identify and secure testimony from parents and children/adolescents who have attempted or completed suicide.

Keys for Networking is a statewide family information center funded in part by the KDADS Prevention grants to provide 1-1 assistance, education for caregivers whose children/adolescents have mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. Since many of these children especially ones with extreme behavioral and social needs experience school difficulties, Keys staff help navigate suspensions, expulsions, referrals for services and assist parents pursue eligibility for special education and other at programs.

Respectfully,

Jane Adams, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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