

Terri A. Erbacher, Jonathan B. Singer,  
and Scott Poland



# Suicide in Schools

## A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention

By Terri A. Erbacher, Jonathan B. Singer, and Scott Poland

Series Editors: Rosemary B. Mennuti, and Ray W. Christner



## SUICIDE IN SCHOOLS

A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-level Prevention,  
Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention

SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICE IN ACTION SERIES

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Includes dozens of reproducible forms and handouts, including PowerPoint presentations, step-by-step instructions on conducting a suicide risk assessment and monitoring suicide risk over time, and state-level data on youth suicide risk.

***Suicide in Schools*** provides school-based professionals with practical easy-to-use guidance on developing and implementing effective suicide prevention, assessment, intervention and postvention strategies. Utilizing a multi-level systems approach, this book includes step-by-step guidelines for

developing crisis teams and prevention programs, assessing and intervening with suicidal youth, and working with families and community organizations during and after a suicidal crisis. The authors include detailed case examples, innovative approaches for professional practice, usable handouts, and internet resources on the best practice approaches to effectively work with youth who are experiencing a suicidal crisis as well as those students, families, school staff, and community members who have suffered the loss of a loved one to suicide. Readers will come away from this book with clear, step-by-step guidelines on how to work proactively with school personnel and community professionals, think about suicide prevention from a three-tiered systems approach, how to identify those who might be at risk, and how to support survivors after a traumatic event--all in a practical, user-friendly format geared especially for the needs of school-based professionals.

**Terri A. Erbacher, PhD** has practiced as a school psychologist for 15 years and is a professor of psychology at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Terri is an author, distinguished speaker, guest expert in the media, and often consults and responds to local school districts in the aftermath of a critical incident. Her passion for helping children in crisis and training school-based professionals has led to her receiving multiple awards for suicide prevention and service to the community, including those from Survivors of Suicide, the Delaware County Suicide Prevention Task Force, the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Dr. Terri was also named Pennsylvania's School Psychologist of the Year in 2011.

**Jonathan Singer, PhD, LCSW** is an assistant professor at Temple University's School of Social Work, where his clinical and research interests focus on family-based interventions for suicidal and cyberbullied youth and the role of technology in prevention and intervention. He served as an advisor for the City of Philadelphia's Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force, Non-homicide Child Death Review, and Pennsylvania Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative. He is the founder and host of the award-winning Social Work Podcast.

**Scott Poland, EdD** is a professor and co-director of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. As a pioneer in school suicide prevention, he published his first book on the subject in 1989 and authored or coauthored every chapter on suicide for the National Association of School Psychologists's *Best Practices in School Psychology* volumes. He previously served as the prevention division director of the American Association of Suicidology and has testified about the mental-health needs of children before the US Congress.

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# Reviews

"This book provides the exact kind of practical information school staff need to know, from how to tell a parent his or her child is contemplating a suicidal act to what the school staff member's responsibility is to the child, the parent, and to the community to address suicidal risk. When combined with the detailed case examples that really bring an extra dimension to the step-by-step guides, this book becomes a must-read for any professional working in a school environment."

- **Thomas Joiner, PhD**, Robert O. Lawton Professor of Psychology at Florida State University and director of the Laboratory for the Study and Prevention of Suicide-Related Conditions and Behaviors

"A comprehensive guide for all educators seeking the current evidenced-based, model practices for suicide prevention in schools. The 'expert tips' reflect a wealth of knowledge gleaned from the front lines, where collaboration is essential between school psychologists, social workers, counselors, and their administrators. The authors paraphrase our national motto: 'Everyone *in the school* plays a role in suicide prevention!'"

- **Richard Lieberman, NCSP**, school psychologist/consultant with the Los Angeles County Suicide Prevention Network

"*Suicide in Schools* is an essential, invaluable resource for all school personnel who are interested in preventing self-harm among their students. User-friendly, yet erudite, the book serves as a manual for evidence-based and innovative practices. If only this reference had been available when, as president of the National Association of School Psychologists, I issued a call to action to prevent suicide."

- **Ralph E. (Gene) Cash, PhD, ABPP**, professor at the Center for Psychological Studies and director of the School-related Psychological Assessments and Clinical Interventions Clinic at Nova Southeastern University

"This book provides a comprehensive examination of the many issues that schools face in working with suicidal youth and provides hands-on strategies that have been successfully implemented in school-based settings. The authors provide excellent case examples and practical information that aligns with clinical and research experts in the field of youth suicidal behavior. Finally, the authors structure their book to extensively explain how a multi-tiered approach can be implemented for suicide prevention, risk assessment, and management of youth suicidal behavior. This book provides exactly the help school personnel need to feel more confident in working with high-risk youth and thus is an invaluable resource for anyone working in the schools and/or working with them. It already has a place on my desk."

- **James J. Mazza, PhD**, professor and director of the school psychology program at the University of Washington