SAFE 2 HELP
ILLINOIS

Safe2Help IL Toolkit
"Seek Help Before Harm"

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Safe2Help Illinois Toolkit Introduction

Safe2Help Illinois is a 24/7 program where students can use a free app, text/phone, website, and other social media platforms to report school safety issues in a confidential environment. Studies have shown a correlation between safety and school academic performance. The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments notes that safe schools promote the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds. In the absence of a trusted adult, Safe2Help Illinois offers students a safe, confidential way in which to share information that might help prevent suicides, bullying, school violence or other threats to school safety. The goal of this program is to provide students a platform to "Seek Help Before Harm."

Safe2Help Illinois is also seen as a long-term initiative to change the school culture in Illinois. Starting with an educational resource as early as preschool, Illinois officials hope to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues, foster a culture of kindness, and instill important lessons such as the difference between telling and tattling, internet safety, and suicide prevention.

This toolkit was created to support school culture change. The resources included are meant to help remove stigma associated with mental health issues, foster a culture of caring, and provide activities which teach important foundational lessons such as the importance of being kind and empathetic.

The Safe2Help Illinois toolkit also provides resources to help parents and educators reinforce the various components of school safety. This toolkit is available at no cost and provides resources for three grade bands – PreK – 4th grades, 5th – 8th grades, and 9th – 12th grades.

The content of this toolkit is intended for use as an educational resource. This toolkit should not be used in making any mental health diagnoses.

For more information visit Safe2HelpIL.com

Safe2Help Illinois
PreK-4th

The resources in this section of the toolkit are intended for early childhood and school-age students through grade 4. Students are introduced to the basic fundamentals of safety. These resources are intended to support learning the concepts of personal safety and setting personal boundaries, empathy, and problem solving by exploring the following topics:

- **Be Kind**
- **Telling vs. Tattling**
- **Trusted Adult**
- **Stress and Anxiety**
- **Healthy Relationships to Reduce Social Isolation**

For each topic, a description of the topic, research to consider when developing lessons and suggested activities with resources are provided. Classroom activities, educational videos, story book suggestions, and more are also included.

Learning Outcomes and Competencies

All lessons derived from the use of this toolkit should connect to the Illinois Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards for upper elementary and junior high schools as outlined in the documents below:

- Illinois Priority Learning Standards for the 2020-21 School Year - Social/Emotional Learning

- Grades 1-5 Social Emotional Learning Performance Descriptors

Be Kind

Background Information

More and more teachers in preschool through 4th grade classrooms are needing to address challenging behaviors in their students. Children are not born with social and emotional skills. They learn them through experience, watching others, and even direct instruction. Helping young students understand, foster and express the concepts of awareness of self and others through teaching self-regulation, kindness, and empathy, can help to curb socially unacceptable actions and increase positive self-esteem and interaction with others.

"Empathy underlies virtually everything that makes society work—like trust, altruism, collaboration, love, charity. Failure to empathize is a key part of most social problems—crime, violence, war, racism, child abuse, and inequity, to name just a few." (Bruce D. Perry, Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential—and Endangered, 2010). Empathy is a work in progress throughout our lifespan. It is important for the development of healthy social relationships and character traits such as caring and kindness. Empathy means a child:

- Understands that she is a distinct person from those around her and that other people may have different feelings and perspectives than her own.
- Can recognize feelings in herself and others and be able to name them.
- Can regulate her own emotional responses.
- Can put herself in someone else's shoes and imagine how someone might feel.
- Can imagine what kind of action or response might help a person feel better.

Research:
- Developing empathy is crucial for bonding with others and for building close and meaningful relationships. (Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. P., 2006).
- Children with strong social and emotional skills tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than less mentally healthy peers. (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik et al. 2015)
- Children who exhibit social and emotional difficulties tend to have trouble following directions and participating in learning activities. Compared with healthier peers, they may be more likely to suffer rejection by classmates, have low self-esteem, do poorly in school, and be suspended. (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik et al. 2015).
- Having higher social-emotional skills in kindergarten is related to important outcomes at age 25 (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Outcomes include:
  - Educational success, such as completing a college degree;

- An increased likelihood of being employed;
- Less likely to be involved in criminal activity;
- The ability to persist when faced with challenging tasks, to effectively seek help when they need it, and to be thoughtful in their actions.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Consistent, developmental characteristics during this early growth period impact how children learn. This should inform instructional practices of how activities and strategies are presented. Best practices for PreK to 4th grade include the following environmental elements:

- A positive relationship-based learning environment.
- Developmentally-appropriate learning experiences that accommodate rapidly developing brains.
- A language-rich environment where teachers utilize broad vocabulary and reflective questions.
- Opportunities to practice skills of appropriate interactions with adults and peers and conflict resolution; the building blocks for executive functioning (EF) skills.
- Parents and caregivers involvement and engagement.
- Highly qualified educators with strong knowledge of early childhood development.

Classroom activities in preschool through 4th grade environments will be reflective of the emotional struggles or situational events occurring in the lives of each student. Teachers should identify and take advantage of opportunities presented on any given day and be prepared to adjust activities and instruction to incorporate ideas about empathy and understanding into each lesson (i.e., utilize teachable moments throughout the day, as they arise).

Instructional Practices can include ways to:
- Model how to value feelings through honoring young children's feelings and thoughts.
- Show warmth and empathy towards students.
- Connect feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. For example, when talking about feelings, connect behaviors with the feelings so children understand cause and effect. *("Isabel is very sad that she did not get her turn on the swings. How can we help her feel better?")*
- Build a "climate" of empathy. Put a focus on working together to build a "climate" that encourages children to be empathic and understanding with their family and friends.
- Encourage "Acts of Kindness" by documenting student's interactions showing empathy, caring, and understanding. Highlight those incidents by posting pictures around the room, writing down conversations and sharing positive interactions with caregivers.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help IL Website Resources:

- [Kids resources- Caring and Sharing Videos](#)

Other Resources:

- [Sesame Street in Communities: K in for Kindness](#) Video and activities which show there are many ways to be kind and caring and that kindness counts every day.

- [Second Step: A Violence-Prevention Curriculum. Preschool-Kindergarten (Ages 4-6). Teacher's Guide](#) Committee for Children, Seattle, WA. "Second Step" for preschoolers and kindergartners is a curriculum kit designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in young children and to increase their levels of social competence by teaching skills in empathy, impulse control, and anger management. The kit, which is part of a series that includes curricula for grades 1-3, 4-5, and 6-8, can be integrated into early childhood programs and is a companion to the "Talking About Touching Early Childhood Kit," a personal safety curriculum.

- [A Mindfulness-based Curriculum for Preschoolers](#) We now know that emotional intelligence — what we call EQ — is a greater predictor of life success than IQ, yet there's little research on how children can actually learn social and emotional skills that will build resilience and well-being in their lives into adulthood. Our Center at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and many other research labs, are discovering what kind of activities promote well-being.

- [Programs and Practices to Prevent School Violence and Improve School Safety](#) Maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment is important for students' well-being and quality of education. Schools and communities seek the most effective strategies to ensure the safety of students and staff. This literature review discusses the evidence on various school safety practices and programs. Though schools have been quick to implement strategies such as hiring police officers and installing metal detectors, research shows that schools may benefit more from investing in support staff, such as nurses and counselors, and by relying on rehabilitative practices (e.g., social skills training) as opposed to punitive discipline (e.g., suspension and expulsion).

- [U.S. Department of Education Bullying Prevention](#) When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. Parents, school staff, and other adults in the community can help kids prevent bullying by talking about it, building a safe school environment, and creating a community-wide bullying prevention strategy.

- [Embedding Bullying Prevention in Core Curriculum](#) A Teacher's Guide K-12 This curriculum guide provides information on the following: • Why include bullying prevention in the core curriculum? • What bullying prevention messages are important to emphasize? • How do these messages fit into the core curriculum? More information is available on the Massachusetts Department of Education website at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/bullying/

- [Center on PBIS Bullying Prevention](#) Bullying is frequently noted as an example of disrespectful and aggressive behavior. The majority of bullying and harmful behavior happens in order to get attention, praise, or social status from by-standers, peers, or even the victim. An effective social culture has a formal process for limiting the social rewards available for bullying, and harmful behavior. We call this bullying prevention.

- [9 Tips for Teaching Kindness in the Classroom from PBS.org](#) Although there's no denying that teachers have various demands to tend to, devoting ample time to nurturing the classroom culture through teaching kindness is exactly what allows us to be successful in other areas.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

- **PreK – Kindergarten**
  - **Understanding Feelings and Emotions** (Incorporate in Circle Time or Story time):
    a. **How do I feel?** Identify emotions based on physical or situational cues.
    b. **Same thing, different feeling.** Recognize that people can feel different ways about the same thing (i.e., I cry when my dad drops me off at school; Lucy is happy when she comes to school.)

c. **Changing feelings.** Understand why I can be scared to talk to adults, but excited to talk to my friends. Or, Ben wanted to play with me yesterday, but he is playing with someone else today.
d. **Listening to each other.** Demonstrate how listening and taking turns talking can show caring.
e. **Caring Actions.** Model and practice skills and actions that that tell others you care.

Take home material: Create an "Emotion Collage" by cutting pictures from magazines or drawing faces showing different feelings or emotions.

- **1st – 2nd Grade Activities**
    a. Set classroom expectations and norms together for how students want to be treated by each other.
    b. Read stories about being kindness and discuss character behaviors and actions.
    c. Model kindness verbally and non-verbally.
    d. complete a T-Chart for what kindness looks like and doesn't look like.

- **3rd – 4th Grade Activities**
    a. Learning comes from experience and practice
    b. Have students identify individuals in the school and/or community who demonstrate kindness.
    c. Identify, practice, and discuss Acts of Kindness that students have given or received.
    d. Discuss kind behaviors demonstrated by characters in stories. Rewrite stories reflecting all characters being kind. How will it change the flow of the story? Does it change the ending?

Telling vs. Tattling

Background Information

As adults, a level of trust is built with young children where they can communicate their needs and concerns, especially as it relates to their safety. Helpful adults encourage young children to tell someone if they feel they are being bullied, mistreated, or their safety is at risk. It is also important to help young children understand how to identify when there is indeed an issue that needs to be addressed with the help of an adult.

In the early years, children may find any situation that is less favorable to them as an issue which can lead to tattling. On the other hand, some may be hesitant of telling with the fear of being seen as a "tattletale" which can be harmful when there is an issue of safety present. With the prevalence of bullying and other safety concerns today, this aspect of Safe2Help is very important because young children need to be comfortable telling an adult if they feel they or their peer are unsafe. Educating young children about the difference will help them feel empowered to tell vs tattle.

The line between telling and tattling can be blurred in the minds of young children. What is the difference? According to Jamie M. Howard, PhD of Child Mind Institute, tattling is the reporting of a peer's wrongdoing when the situation is safe and able to be handled by the child themselves. Whereas telling is defined as alerting adults of a situation that is not safe and the child is unable to manage or solve on their own.

Gundersen Health System provides the following examples as a means of differentiating the two.

- Telling
    - The child telling wants to keep themselves or others safe.
    - The child telling is concerned about safety.
    - The problem is important and urgent.
    - Someone may be hurt or in danger.
    - An adult is needed to help solve the problem.
- Tattling

    - The child tattling wants to get someone else in trouble or avoid blame.
    - The child tattling may have something to gain, such as attention or popularity.
    - No one is hurt or in danger.
    - It is not an important problem and can be solved without an adult.

▪ The child threatens to tell on another in order to control the other child.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Understanding Why Children Tattle: In addition to knowing the difference between telling and tattling, understanding why children do tattle is also helpful. Responsive Classroom explains common reasons children tend to tattle:

1. **Legitimate concerns:** Students may have good reasons for concern about others' behavior and its effects on them and their friends. We need to fully embrace this truth.
2. **Need for information:** Some children may be testing the limits or trying to figure out whether you'll enforce rules. When we respond with a disapproving "Remember— no tattling," or a pointed question such as, "Do I need to know that?" they become confused.
3. **Wish for attention or recognition.** Some children want us to notice them or to acknowledge their efforts at following the rules.
4. **Limited problem-solving skills:** Adults often tell students to handle problems themselves, but students may lack the skills to do so. Tattling may be their only problem-solving strategy.

Addressing Tattling in the Classroom: To reduce tattling, establish classroom rules around the topic. Once children understand the difference between telling and tattling, they will know when to seek the help of an adult. Provide children with tools and words to help with their decision making. Child Mind Institute notes that children can solve problems on their own if they are able to identify the problem and use words that best express their frustrations. Helping children talk through a moment of frustration equips them with tools that will help them approach a similar situation in the future.

To help combat tattling in the classroom, Responsive Classroom offers these suggestions:
- Be ready with respectful responses to tattlers.
- Let students report to you privately.
- Reinforce students who report serious incidents.
- Help parents understand and support your approach.
- Give students positive ways to get your attention.
- Teach conflict resolution.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- [Kids Resources- Tattling and Telling Videos](#)

Other Resources:

- [Child Mind Institute](#) Is It Tattling or Telling?

- [Gundersen Health System](#) Together Against Bullying: Telling vs. Tattling

- [Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower International](#) Tattling and Telling: What's the Difference?

- [Monique Burr Foundation](#) Discussing Sensitive Topics with Children

- [Creating Safe and Respectful Environment in our Nations Classrooms](#)

- [Responsive Classroom](#) What to Do About Tattling

- [Safe2tell Colorado](#) Telling vs. Tattling/Snitching

- [Sesame Street in Communities](#) Reporting Bullying

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

- **Pre-K – Kindergarten Activities**
    a. Use books to teach tattling vs telling. (**A Bad Case of Tattle Tongue** by Julia Cook and *Don't Squeal Unless It's a Big Deal* by Jeanie Franz Ransom are two examples.)
    b. Use picture cards to differentiate between tattling and telling.

c. Teach students steps to a problem-solving process (i.e., 1st Step: What is the problem; 2nd Step: What are some solutions, 3rd Step: Which solution is better; and 4th Step: Pick the best solution!)

d. Teach and practice problem solving steps implicitly during carpet time/morning meeting and especially during teachable moments when a problem arises organically in the classroom.

- **1st – 2nd Grade Activities**
  a. Set clear expectations for classroom behavior.
  b. Develop a class T-Chart of examples and non-examples for Telling vs. Reporting. Post the T-Chart prominently in classroom.
  c. Implement classroom meetings and discuss tattling vs telling.
  d. Use examples from literature to discuss when a character is tattling vs when a character should tell a trusted adult.
  e. Use videos to initiate discussion about tattling vs telling.

- **3rd – 4th Grade**
  a. Implement Class Meetings and discuss Tattling vs. Telling ([Second Step Template](#))
  b. Have students work together to develop a list of specific situations they may encounter at school (i.e., name calling, taking another child's belongings, not participating in class, using inappropriate language, etc.)Trade lists with other students and have them decide which should be handled by the student and which should be taken to a trusted adult.
  c. Develop a paper and pencil incident process. If the student believes they have something important to share about someone else, the student will write down the details of the issue and give to teacher following an established procedure. Teacher will monitor and provide feedback to student, as needed. Examples received can be used by the teacher to paraphrase appropriately during classroom meetings to differentiate between tattling and telling.

Trusted Adult

Background Information

What can be done to help young children understand how to keep themselves safe? It is difficult for young children to understand the concepts of risk and vulnerability, to understand how to distinguish between a trusted adult and an adult that may harm them or do something inappropriate. A teacher's role is to build a safe environment for students and develop a trusting relationship with both the child and their caregiver. It is essential to help children establish trusting relationships, learn good communication skills and practice safe habits.

Adverse childhood experiences negatively impact mental and physical health across the life-course. Such impacts may be substantively mitigated by always having support from an adult you trust in childhood. (Bellis, M.A., Hardcastle, K., Ford, K. et al., 2017.)

Consider the following statistics gathered from the National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019:

- One out of every five (20.2%) students report being bullied.
- 41% of students who reported being bullied at school indicated that they think the bullying would happen again.
- A slightly higher portion of female than of male students report being bullied at school (24% vs. 17%).
- Bullied students reported that bullying occurred in the following places: the hallway or stairwell at school (43%), inside the classroom (42%), in the cafeteria (27%), outside on school grounds (22%), online or by text (15%), in the bathroom or locker room (12%), and on the school bus (8%).

In addition, studies by David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, show that:

- 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse;
- Self-report studies show that 20% of adult females and 5-10% of adult males recall a childhood sexual assault or sexual abuse incident;
- During a one-year period in the U.S., 16% of youth ages 14 to 17 had been sexually victimized;
- Over the course of their lifetime, 28% of U.S. youth ages 14 to 17 had been sexually victimized;

- Children are most vulnerable to childhood sexual assault between the ages of 7 and 13.

According to a [2003 National Institute of Justice report](#), 3 out of 4 adolescents who have been sexually assaulted were victimized by someone they knew well (page 5). Every child needs an adult in their life they can talk to if they or someone they know has been hurt or if they are concerned about their safety. They need adults they can trust to help keep them safe. Trusted Adults, in turn, need to know how to help if a child ever comes to them to report they have been harmed.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Dr. Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D offers these classroom strategies in [Scholastic](#) to provide the safety and predictability that children need:

- **Keep the first few weeks of school simple.** Repeat the schedule and rules many times. Once a child feels comfortable with the school day, flexibility and change can more easily be introduced.
- **Be predicable in your interactions with children.** This is more important than the number of minutes spent in each activity.
- **Be attuned to each child's overload point.** Let children find some space and solitude when they seem to be overwhelmed.
- **Find time during the day for quiet.** Solitude allows the brain to "catch up" and process the new experiences of the day. This leads to better consolidation of new experience and better learning.
- **Keep the first challenges light and the praise heavy.** Confidence and pleasure come from success. Let everyone succeed at something.
- **Emphasize the importance of good nutrition and proper bed rest.** Children cannot learn when they are hungry or tired. Also, let parents know that their children are likely to be more irritable at home, will need more sleep, and will need some "decompression" time at home after school. Remind them that even pleasant experiences can be stressful.
- **Remember that you make all the difference.** These first experiences with school can help reinforce a child's curiosity and love of learning. You create the emotional and social climate of safety that makes your classroom a place for optimal learning.

Resource Content Overview: Classroom activity in preschool through 4th grade environments, especially, will be reflective of the emotional struggles or situational events occurring in the lives of each of the students. Rather than fight the mood in the room, teachers should identify and take advantage of opportunities presented on any given day. Be prepared to adjust

curriculum and instruction and incorporate ideas about empathy and understanding into each lesson, regardless of the topic (i.e., utilize teachable moments as they present themselves).

Instructional Practices: Positive early learning environments start with the teacher when they create a positive social and emotional environment that is built on caring and responsive relationships. Children can't explore and learn, experience joy and wonder, until they feel secure. They need to trust their caregivers and know their needs will be met. Young children need adults to establish the relationships by being consistent and responding to social and emotional cues, both in classrooms and home-based settings. (Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center)

Educators should:

- Identify their own feelings and reactions when they are stressed.
- Find healthy outlets to manage their emotions. Exercise can be an effective stress management practice for many people, while others find that meditation works best. Experiment and discover which strategies works best.
- Pay attention to personal thoughts and beliefs about child development, behavior expectations, and individual children. Make sure interactions are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive.
- Use strategies to calm oneself to respond to children effectively and compassionately. Drinking a glass of water, singing a song with the children…find what works best.

Suggested Resources

Other Resources:

- IL Department of Children and Family Services "You are Not Alone" Campaign To ensure that children know that it is never okay for anyone to hurt or neglect them, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is launching the "You are Not Alone" campaign with the simple message: if someone is hurting you, there is help available.

- 1, 2, 3, Count on Me by *Sesame Street in Communities* Every child has the right to physical and emotional safety. For children who repeatedly witness violence in their communities, it helps to remember that there are trustworthy adults who are their allies.

- The Five Safety Rule by *The Monique Burr Foundation* The 5 Safety Rules are taught to children in the MBF Prevention Education Programs. Parents or other adults can reinforce the rules with children by asking them to explain each Safety Rule and

practicing the motions with elementary aged children. Additionally, parents and adults can use the 5 Safety Rules themselves to better protect children. For additional information, visit www.mbfpreventioneducation.org, and/or download the "Child Safety Matters" app at no cost from the App Store or Google Play.

- [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape Safe Secure Kids](#) Free resources can be found here to help caregivers prevent sexual abuse and harassment by communicating with children about respect and consent.

- [Safe Adults by The Monique Burr Foundation](#) Every child needs adults in their life they can talk to if they have been hurt or are concerned about their safety. They need adults they can trust to help keep them safe. And their Safe Adults need to know how to help if a child ever comes to them to report they have been harmed. Read here to learn how you can be a Safe Adult and find additional resources.

- [Childhelp Resources for Teachers](#) The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. The Hotline's services are available to professionals who need help to report suspected abuse. This includes school nurses, teachers, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, pediatric dentists, fire investigators, and members of the faith community. All calls are anonymous and toll-free.

- [Teaching Young Children Habits for Personal Safety by *the California Childcare Health Program*](#) A published brochure can be found here from Child Care Health Connections on how to promote personal safety for young children.

- [School-Based Prevention Programs from the *Child Welfare Information Gateway*](#) Teachers and other school staff are in an optimal position to prevent, identify, and assist victims of child abuse and neglect because of their frequent contact with students.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

- **Pre-K – Kindergarten Activities**

  a. My Trusted Adults Hand- Either provide a template or have students draw an outline of their hand. For each finger, have them identify the network of people such as parents or guardians, family members, teachers, and so on who are adults they trust and who listen to them.
  b. At circle time, have a silhouette outlined with Trusted Adult written in the middle. Discuss and list behaviors describing a trusted adult (i.e., complete the sentences, "A trusted adult…." and "A trusted adult makes me feel…").
  c. Talk about different situations students should report to a trusted adult.
  d. Discuss what 911 is and when to use it.
  e. Connect with your local Child Advocacy Center or Prevention Center for school programs available to come to speak to groups.

- **1st – 2nd Grade Activities**

  a. [Know the Rules: Tell a Trusted Adult by NetSmartzKids](#)- Students will learn to tell a parent, guardian, or trusted adult if anything happens to them. Students will also learn who are trusted adults. Share this [accompanying video](#) & [worksheet](#) with class.
      - Discussion questions:
          - Who is a trusted adult?
          - What kinds of things should you tell a trusted adult?
          - Who can be a trusted adult in your life?
  b. Trusted Tree Activity- Have students outline a tree. Have them choose at least three trusted adults and write their names on the branches. Post the trees on a bulletin board to highlight that the students are surrounded by trusted adults should they need them.

- **3rd – 4th Grade Activities**

  a. Download and share a video with the class- [KidSmartz: Tell A Trusted Adult](#)
      - Discussion questions:
          - What does the word trust mean?
          - What qualities does a trusted adult have?
          - Who are some trusted adults in your life?

b. Journaling- Have students journal about different scenarios describing when they should go to a trusted adult.
c. [Trusted Adult Interview from *KidSmartz* pgs.15 –16](#) - Students are to ask a trusted adult the following questions when they interview them:
   - What do you think the word trust means?
   - How do you try to show me you are trustworthy?
   - Why is your job as a trusted adult so important?
   - If I were sad, scared, confused, how would you try to help me?
   - I believe I can trust you. How does that make you feel?

Stress and Anxiety

Background Information

Feeling anxious is expected in stressful situations. For example, first day of school jitters are anticipated or standing in front of an audience for the first time may have a student feeling nervous, scared, or worried. For most, those feelings will go away once they feel safe and get used to the new experience. For others, though, the feeling may be intense and remain that way over an extended period of time. When those feelings do not go away and life activities are impacted negatively, they may be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

Research: Child Mind Institute discusses the different kinds of anxiety, which may be hard to detect as anxiety in the classroom (https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/). Classroom signs for teachers to consider may include:

- Inattention and restlessness;
- Attendance issues and clinginess;
- Disruptive behavior;
- Troubling answering questions in class;
- Frequent trips to the nurse;
- Problems in certain subjects;
- Not turning in homework;
- Avoiding socializing or group work.

Many of these signs are considered something other than anxiety initially, for example inattention and restlessness potentially could be thought of as Attention Deficit/Hyper Activity Disorder. All anxiety disorders involve fear, worry, and excessive distress for the individual. It is important for a healthcare provider or mental health professional to make this level of diagnosis, however, and not an educator. The educator's role is to maintain open and trusting communication with the child's caregiver and make them aware of any signs of anxiety they may see with the student during the school day.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Environment: Providing an environment where students feel safe and cared for lays a foundation for supporting a child dealing with severe stress or anxiety. Any crisis or stressor will impact the functioning of the brain. As the Harvard Center for the Developing Child states, "Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy child development. When a child's stress response systems are activated within an environment of supportive relationships with adults, the psychological effects (of the stress) are buffered and brought

back down to baseline." In other words, when a child feels anxious, their stress response increases to protect them in case they are in real danger. Having supportive relationships in a caring and positive environment helps children regulate their emotions and become more resilient and understanding of change.

Instructional practices can include ways to:
a. Define what anxiety is.
b. Talk about stress and anxiety and the brain.
c. Teach students how to recognize anxious feelings.
d. Help them develop coping strategies for anxiety.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- [It's OK to Not be OK Video](#)

Other Resources:

- [Trauma-responsive Universal Online Modules](#) The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Center for Childhood Resilience (CCR) at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and Peoria Regional Office of Education have partnered to provide a Virtual Learning Community (VLC) which provides free virtual on-demand training and education resources to help educators, clinicians, parents, and caregivers better support the mental health and resilience of the children and youth in their communities.

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) Use the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's (NCTSN) "Creating, Supporting and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework," to consider how schools can adapt or transform their practices by using a trauma-informed approach to help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. It provides trauma-informed school strategies during COVID-19.

- [Conscious Discipline – COVID-19 Stress: How uncertainty Affects our Brains](#) We are living during a time of great uncertainty with COVID-19. Prolonged uncertainty causes predictable changes in the brain for both adults and children. We can use a foundational understanding of these changes to create greater resilience, new ways of thinking, and increased wellbeing for ourselves and our children.

- [Child Mind Institute – The Power of Mindfulness](#) Discusses how a meditation practice can help kids become less anxious and more focused.

- [Harvard University Center in the Developing Child – Persistent Fear and Anxiety can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development](#) It is essential that children have safe, secure environments in which to grow, learn, and develop healthy brains and bodies. Science shows that early exposure to circumstances that produce persistent fear and chronic anxiety can have lifelong effects on <u>brain architecture</u>.

- [Dr. Bruce Perry – Emotional Contagion: Neurosequential Network Stress and Trauma Series](#) This video discusses 'emotional contagion' and talks about the power of calm. The concept of power differential is discussed in context of human interactions and discusses the importance of calm, regulated leadership in times of stress and distress.

<u>Sample Classroom Strategies</u>

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards

- **PreK – Kindergarten Activities**
  a. Make the days predictable for students. Predictability reduces anxiousness. Make daily picture schedules to post at circle time. For the first few days, place the pictures in order of the daily activities. After a few days, have the students put the pictures in order. Starting the day in this way reduces worry around what to expect.
  b. During circle time, discuss feelings and the difference between anxiety and normal worries. Talk about how these feelings can have physical symptoms, too, like tummy aches or quick. shallow breathing.
  c. Practice the coping strategy of Belly Breathing with [Sesame Street](#)
  d. Practice the coping strategy of Mindfulness with Sesame Street and Headspace ([6 YouTube Kids videos linked in article](#))

- **1st-2nd Grade Activities**

a. Make the days predictable for students. Predictability reduces anxiousness. Daily schedules outlined on the Board and discussed prior to starting the day, reduces worry around what to expect.

b. After defining anxiety, talk about what is happening in the students' brains. Share the Fight, Flight, Freeze- A Guide to Anxiety for Kids video and discuss:

- As a class, discuss how students feel when they start to become anxious…Help them organize the feelings with 4 warning signs questions:
    o What do I DO when I'm starting to feel anxious?
    o What do I SAY when I'm starting to feel anxious?
    o What does my body LOOK like when I'm starting to feel anxious?
    o What does my body FEEL like when I'm starting to feel anxious?

c. Use literature (such as the book, ***What is a Thought?*** by Amy Kahofer and Jack Pransky with lessons included) to discuss the amazing power of thought.

- **3rd -4th Grade Activities**
    a. Make the days predictable for students. Predictability reduces anxiousness. Daily schedules outlined on the Board and discussed prior to starting the day, reduces worry around what to expect.

    b. Use the video scene from the movie Inside Out to discuss anxiety and depression:

    - Define and discuss Self-compassion. Have students journal about times they felt anxious for an extended period of time. Looking back, write what they would say to their younger selves to help them be less anxious and stressed?

Healthy Relationships to Reduce Social Isolation

Background Information

Suicide is an increasingly critical issue facing students today. Sandy Hook Promise (SandyHookPromise.org) shares that since 2007, the national number of hospital visits for suicidal thoughts and attempts has nearly doubled – from 580,000 to 1.2 million among children ages 5-18. Data from the 2017 Youth Behavior Survey show consistent numbers over the past 20 years for those who have thoughts about, attempted and completed suicide even with all the prevention activities happening. Prevention efforts with earlier ages is key! Many of these self-harm incidents are related to a young person being socially isolated with few positive healthy relationships in their life. Due to COVID-19, social isolation has increased drastically, therefore additional emphasis needs to be directed at connecting ALL students to positive peer relationships and safe virtual communication.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Maintaining a safe environment is part of any school's mission. In the early years, it is essential to provide a safe and caring environment for students whether that is virtual or in-person. Feeling safe allows the brain to move out of the freeze, fight, flight response and feeling cared for allows regulation of the emotional systems. Various promotion and prevention efforts can then support maintaining that environment, such as making sure virtual environments do not allow cyber-bullying and in-person environments focus on the expectation of being kind to one another. Best practices for PreK-4th grade include the following:
- Staff education and resources for the promotion of mental health and wellness.
- Parent education and resources for child and adolescent behavioral health risk and protective factors.
- Student education and resources incorporating social, emotional, mental health and wellness education in school curricula.
- Positive relationships are built with teacher and between students.
- Develop a sense of emotional self-control and social competence within students.
- Direct instruction of how to address bullying both in-person and online.
- In Illinois, AnnMarie's Law (Public Act 99-0443) requires all districts to adopt a suicide prevention policy and procedures. ISBE and stake holders adopted Illinois Association of School Board's PRESS policy 7:290, Suicide and Depression Awareness and Prevention, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/2-3.163, amended by P.A. 99-443 as a model policy. Any school or district who requests a copy will receive it free, regardless of membership

status. To request a copy of the model youth suicide awareness and prevention policy, please email the Illinois Association of School Boards with the subject line of *Suicide Awareness & Prevention Policy Request*. IASB wishes to thank and acknowledge the IASB PRESS Advisory Board who reviewed the sample policy. For more information, please visit the Illinois Association of School Boards Suicide and Depression Awareness and Prevention Policy page. ISBE and the stakeholder group and others created a **Illinois Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit**. This Toolkit is organized into three Modules: 1) Prevention, 2) Intervention, and 3) Postvention.

Instructional practices can include ways to:
- Provide a safe, positive, and welcoming school and classroom environment.
- Review Being Kind, Telling vs Tattling and Trusted Adult instructional strategies.
- Understand what feelings are (definitions).
- Understand/recognize and express their own feelings and the feelings of others.
- Teach how to ask for help for themselves and others.
- Make sure all students are connected to a trusting adult.
- Make sure all students have safe and positive peer connections.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- Kids Resources Videos:
    - Building Self Confidence
    - Tattling vs Telling
    - Caring and Sharing
    - Stop Bullying
    - Staying Safe

Other Resources:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network Use the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's (NCTSN) "Creating, Supporting and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework," to consider how schools can adapt or transform their practices by using a trauma-informed approach to help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. It provides trauma-informed school strategies during COVID-19.

- Isolated Students May Struggle to Stay Mentally Healthy Teachers can build strong relationships with and between students to help them get through this very challenging time.

- [Illinois Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#) This toolkit is an ISBE resources for Administrators, Counselors, Teachers, and Staff.

- [Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators](#) Parents, teachers, and friends are in a key position to pick up on warning signs and get help. Most important is to never take these warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret. When all adults and students in the school community are committed to making suicide prevention a priority-and are empowered to take the correct actions- youth can be helped before they engage in behavior with irreversible consequences.

- [ISBE Bullying Prevention Resources](#)

- [Cyberbullying: What Teachers and Schools Can Do](#) A teacher can be a powerful force in promoting a climate of respect. Education and being on the lookout for signs that cyberbullying is taking place, will help a teacher be the trusted adult a student turns to for help.

- [Illinois Attorney General's Internet Safety Website](#) This webpage helps educators prepare students by fulfilling requirements under the Illinois School Code for annual, age-appropriate internet safety instruction to students in grades 3-12 (105 ILCS 5/27-13.3. This page includes suggestions.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

- **Pre-K-Kindergarten**
    a. Develop and maintain a safe and supportive (bully-free) environment in the classroom and school settings.
    b. Encourage children to engage in healthy, cooperative interactions, and discourage bullying behaviors intended to hurt and exclude targeted classmates.

c. Talk with young children about bullying. Dealing with bullying directly and openly lets everyone know that bullying is an important concern, that it will not be tolerated, and that everyone needs to work together to stop and prevent it.

d. Engage children in activities to develop the social skills they need to help stop and prevent bullying, including being kind, empathetic, assertive, and problem-solving.

e. Use literature to highlight cooperation, kindness, and friendship. Discuss characters' feelings when they are on the receiving end of someone being mean to them.

f. Take advantage of teachable moments and intervene immediately and effectively whenever children engage in pre-bullying and bullying behaviors. Intervention is most effective when it includes all children: children who bully, children who are victims, and children who are bystanders to bullying.

g. Engage parents in bullying prevention initiatives by helping them talk to their children about bullying and teaching their children social skills for preventing bullying.

b. 1st-2nd Grade
   a. See Pre-K-Kindergarten Activities and adjust for grade level skills
   b. Discuss stories being read in class and identify various perspectives of the characters.
   c. Role play scenarios:
      o How to Make New Friends
      o How to respond to someone bullying you
      o How to respond to someone bullying someone else
   d. Develop a T-Chart of What Is and What Is Not considered bullying.

- **3rd-4th Grade**
   a. See Pre-K-2 Activities (above) and adjust for grade level competencies.
   b. Have an Anti-Bullying (Cyber or In-Person) poster contest.
   c. Implement inclusionary programs such as Sandy Hook's Start with Hello to reduce social isolation.
   d. Implement conflict resolution programs such as Peer Mediators to allow student engagement and involvement in developing norms of behavior and behavioral responses.
   e. Write a classroom newsletter highlighting Acts of Kindness seen throughout the school or online.

Safe2Help Illinois

5th-8th

The resources in this section of the toolkit are intended for middle school students. As students reach their early teen years, they become more aware of themselves and begin to process societal norms and expectations. In some instances, youth may feel pressure to live up to these expectations. Additionally, students are exposed to an extensive platform of information through the internet and may experience cyberbullying. It is important students are equipped with skills to help them navigate such challenges. In this section of Safe2Help Illinois, students will discuss the following topics:

- **Suicidal Thoughts and Prevention**
- **Self-Injury**
- **Stress and Anxiety**
- **Social Isolation**
- **Internet Safety**

Each of the topics include best practices for teaching and suggested resources. Check out the Safe2Help Illinois Teens Helping Teens - Learn, Understand, and Help webpage for videos that can help facilitate conversations.

Learning Outcomes and Competencies

All lessons derived from the use of this toolkit should connect to the Illinois Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards for upper elementary and junior high schools as outlined in the documents below:

- Illinois Priority Learning Standards for the 2020-21 School Year - Social/Emotional Learning

- Grades 1-5 Social Emotional Learning Performance Descriptors

- Grades 6-12 Social Emotional Learning Performance Descriptors

Suicidal Thoughts and Prevention

Background Information

Suicidal thoughts can be frightening. Even though it I may seem scary to talk about them, it is very important to acknowledge how someone is feeling. Teens should always feel safe enough to tell an adult if they are feeling suicidal or if they have a friend who is feeling suicidal. Talking with students about never keeping suicidal thoughts a secret is crucial. Conversations about suicidal thoughts may be upsetting but it is an important conversation to have because it saves lives.

Suicide prevention is a collection of efforts to reduce the risk of suicide. These efforts may occur at the individual, relationship, community, and societal level. Suicide is preventable.

- 2 in 10 Illinois students report being bullied.
- Students who are bullied are twice as likely to attempt suicide,
- 47,000 Illinois students reported attempting suicide in 2015.
- Nearly 100 Illinois youth ages 10 to 19 died by suicide in 2015.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, over 48,000 people died by suicide in the United States in 2018. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death worldwide and the second leading cause of death for those aged 15-34. In Illinois, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death resulting in more than 1,000 deaths each year. Studies suggest that engaging at-risk individuals through public awareness can be an effective method of suicide prevention and support. Suicide is complicated and tragic but is often preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide, and how to help, can help save lives. Look for both direct and indirect signs.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

The best way to prevent suicide is to use a comprehensive approach that includes these key components:

- Promote emotional well-being and connectedness among all students.
- Identify students who may be at risk for suicide and assist them in getting help.
- Be prepared to respond when a suicide death occurs.

Here are five action steps for helping someone in emotional pain from the [National Institute of Mental Health](#):

1. **ASK**: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" It's not an easy question but studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.

2. **KEEP THEM SAFE**: Reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.

3. **BE THERE**: Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Research suggests acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

4. **HELP THEM CONNECT**: Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number (1-800-273-TALK) and the Crisis Text Line (741741) in your phone so they are there if you need them. You can also help make a connection with a trusted individual like a family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional. Access www.safe2helpil.com or reach out at (844) 472-3345.

5. **STAY CONNECTED**: Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

Instructional Practices include ways to:

- Be authentic when [talking](#) with the person. Talk openly and honestly; he/she will not expect to hear the perfect words but will sense the concern for their well-being when they feel the honesty and pure intent.
- [Just listen](#). The suicidal person may need to simply vent their feelings, anger, or frustrations, however hostile or intense their emotions may seem at that moment. In general, be more of a listener and less of a talker in this situation. Remember: their willingness to express themselves and unload is a positive sign.
- Be sympathetic, understanding, patient, and calm. It takes a lot of strength and courage for a suicidal person to share their story with someone. If they are able to open up, they are relying on others to be accepting and non-judgmental about whatever they have to say.
- Be direct and matter-of-fact about suicide. Do not tiptoe around the subject for fear of putting ideas into the person's head. Listening to their concerns and tackling the subject

head-on is the best way to show comfort in discussing it, and that they have found a trusted confidante.

- Offer hope when they need it most. Offering unconditional support and encouragement can be crucial to a person contemplating suicide. Let them know they can seek professional help and reassure them that their feelings are temporary, and their presence in life is valued.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- Helping a Friend at Risk of Suicide Provides a list of suggested actions to take when concerned about a friend.

- Suicidal Thoughts Teens learn the warning sign of suicide personally and within others.

- Creating a Safety Plan Allows students to outline personal strategies that can be used to deal with any negative thoughts and emotions.

- ID Your Feelings Allows student to think through their feelings to identify the cause. They will also be able to identify ways of coping with their feelings.

- Write A No Send Letter It can be hard to share feelings with someone when feeling hurt, angry or anxious. Sometimes it helps to write that person a letter -- with no intention of ever sending it. It's an easy way to get feelings out on paper especially when not wanting or being able to share those thoughts and feelings right then.

Other Resources:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

- Stress Catcher from The National Institute of Mental Health create a fun and interactive way for children to practice coping strategies

- [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) The Illinois Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, released in 2020, is a comprehensive, public health-based strategy to prevent suicide. It is the second of a three-step process initiated last year to reverse the relentlessly increasing suicide rates in the State of Illinois.

- [Illinois Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit](#) This Toolkit is an ISBE resource for Administrators, Counselors, Teachers, and Staff.

- In Illinois, AnnMarie's Law ([Public Act 99-0443](#)) requires all districts to adopt a suicide prevention policy and procedures. ISBE and stakeholders adopted Illinois Association of School Board's PRESS policy 7:290, Suicide and Depression Awareness and Prevention, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/2-3.163, amended by P.A. 99-443 as a model policy. Any school or district who requests a copy will receive it free, regardless of membership status. To request a copy of the model youth suicide awareness and prevention policy, please email the [Illinois Association of School Boards](#) with the subject line of **Suicide Awareness & Prevention Policy Request**. IASB wishes to thank and acknowledge the IASB PRESS Advisory Board who reviewed the sample policy. For more information, please visit the Illinois Association of School Boards [Suicide and Depression Awareness and Prevention Policy](#) page. ISBE and the stakeholder group and others created a **Illinois Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit**. This Toolkit is organized into three Modules: 1) Prevention, 2) Intervention, and 3) Postvention.

- [Preventing Suicide Technical Package](#) The strategies represented in this CDC Preventing Suicide package include those with a focus on preventing the risk of suicide in the first place as well as approaches to lessen the immediate and long-term harms of suicidal behavior for individuals, families, communities, and society. These strategies include strengthening economic supports; strengthening access and delivery of suicide care; creating protective environments; promoting connectedness; teaching coping and problem-solving skills; identifying and supporting people at risk; and lessening harms and preventing future risk. The strategies in the technical package support the goals and objectives of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

- [Suicide Prevention Month Ideas for Action](#) Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides activities, videos, and resources to support suicide prevention month.

- [A Journey Toward Health and Hope](#) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services Division of Prevention, Traumatic Stress, and Special Programs Suicide Prevention Branch provide a guide to help take the first steps toward recovery after a suicide attempt. This resource contains experiences of individuals, some named, some

anonymous, who have survived a suicide attempt. This resource contains interactive activities to help process and begin the journey to recovery.

- Are Classrooms Ready for Trauma? Studies show that 1 in 10 students have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that can affect social, psychological, cognitive, and biological issues and cause difficulty regulating emotions, paying attention, forming good relationships. Trauma impacts student behavior and their ability to learn. This resource includes strategies for the classroom including recognizing survival mode, creating calm and predictable transitions, and effective ways to offer praise.

- Effective Suicide Prevention This video provides a brief overview of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Effective Suicide Prevention Model to help carry out suicide prevention efforts that are most likely to be effective.

- Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents & Educators Suicide prevention should be an integral component of a multi-tiered system of mental health and safety supports. The National Association of School Psychologists site provides tips for teens, information for administration and crisis teams, facts and tips for parents and educators, and a model school district suicide prevention policy.

- Holding on to Life Toolkit Michigan's Holding On To Life Toolkit contains information on: why are adolescents so moody, what should I remove from my home right now, how do I know if a loved one is suicidal, do I need to watch for suicide, how to handle the return to school, what should I say to a love one, why am I feeling this way, and how should I help. It also includes a section on safety planning and a "my safety plan" worksheet.

- Preventing Suicide: The Role of High School Teachers The Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides key steps to reduce suicide risk among students. This resource includes tips to identify who might be at risk, signs of immediate or serious risk, responses to at risk students, responding to a suicide death, and school wide suicide prevention.

- US Department of Health and Human Services: How You Can Play a Role in Preventing Suicide The effects of suicide are not limited to those who die. Suicide is a serious public health problem that has shattered the lives of millions of people, families, and communities nationwide. We can all take action to reduce its toll. A variety of strategies are available for individuals and organizations across the United States to help prevent suicide.

- Suicidal Behavior Among Illinois Youth Factsheet presented by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

- After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), two of the nation's leading

suicide prevention organizations, have collaborated to produce this toolkit to assist schools in the aftermath of a suicide (or other death) in the school community.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. Suicide Prevention Lesson Activities

o **Suicide Prevention** from *KidsHealth.org* Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for teens, after accidents and homicide. About 1 in 15 high school students attempt suicide each year, and roughly 1 in 50 make an attempt serious enough to require medical attention. Peers and teachers are often the first ones to notice the warning signs – if they know what to look for. These activities will help students understand when and how to get help for themselves or classmates.

o **Suicide Prevention** from *pbs.org* The objectives of these activities are to: 1) Learn key concepts of suicide prevention; 2) Understand the characteristics of students who are at higher risk to attempt suicide; 3) Know warning signs of suicidal teens; 4) Know what to do if a friend is suicidal,; 5) Practice needed skills by studying stories of suicidal teenagers; and 6)Discern facts and myths of suicide.

b. Discuss factors that cause both positive and negative stress.
c. Identify physical reactions to stress (increased energy, increased heart rate, respiration, sweaty palms, red face, etc.).
d. Brainstorm strategies to reduce stress (talking to a friend or trusted adult, physical exercise).
e. Create a list of stress management skills that work best for the students in the class.

f. Allow students to share what they feel are strengths and weaknesses and how that influences their choices and decisions.
g. Support goal setting skill development
- Have students set goals they expect to achieve in a month or two in academic performance.
- Brainstorm possible obstacles to achieving the goals that have been set.
- Identify people who can help achieve the goals and how to make adjustments if needed.
- Model how to monitor an action plan created to achieve long-term goals.
h. Evaluate strategies for resisting pressures to engage in unsafe or unethical activities.

Internet Safety

Background Information

Internet safety (e.g., online safety, cyber safety, or E-Safety) is using specific strategies to be safe on the internet. This includes having the knowledge of how to maximize the user's personal safety and reducing security risks to private information and property associated with using the internet, and the self-protection from computer crime.

The Internet is a fun and educational resource, but all users should understand the importance of online safety. Youth should be aware of threats to themselves and their computers before surfing the Internet and downloading files and programs. It is recommended that rules are established and discussed along with providing safety tips before allowing them to go online.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Seven internet safety topics to teach in middle school are:
- Verifying someone's identity.
- Verifying a link is safe.
- Identifying an online scam.
- Protecting privacy.
- Creating and using passwords.
- Identifying, not participating, and stopping cyberbullying.
- Becoming a good digital citizen.

Instructional Practices include ways to:

1. **Get parents involved**
   Studies have shown that the main reason many kids do not use drugs is because they do not want to disappoint their parents. Educating parents on the dangers of inappropriate usage of technology and encouraging them to talk to their children about it is an effective way to ensure that students are safe online, both at school and at home. Direct parents to infographics or other sources of readily available information like the following: Internet Safety: Tips for Kids & Teens
2. **Provide resources to students**
   It is unlikely that students want to listen to an hour-long lecture on the dangers of the internet. Share resources in an engaging, authentic, and useful way.
3. **Create scenarios**
   Create sample scenarios about possible dangerous internet usage and pass them out to the class. The goal is to allow students to arrive at their own conclusion (with guidance)

of the inherent danger in situations like these. By encouraging students to figure out the answer themselves, you not only empower them but educate them as well. Make it a point to encourage students to respect themselves and to remove themselves from any situation where they are uncomfortable, being bullied, or being attacked. Use these scenarios to discuss with students how to handle hurtful, uncomfortable, or dangerous situations.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- Kids Resources: Staying Safe Videos

- Internet Safety Tips for Teens – Helpful and Funny Video

Other Resources:

- US Department of Homeland Security Provides parent and educator resources.

- NetSmartz Provides videos covering topics such as cyberbullying, gaming, online enticement, sexting and sextortion, smartphones, and social media sites. Videos are age-appropriate geared for Elementary or Middle and High School aged students.

- Common Sense: 5 Internet Safety Tips for Kids Sharing photos, posting comments, playing video games -- these are just a few of the ways that kids interact online. But when sharing goes beyond friends and family, it can be risky. Read about privacy and Internet safety and watch this video to learn five Internet safety rules for kids.

- Teach Digital Citizenship Skills to Prevent Cyberbullying Digital citizenship is appropriate, responsible behavior when using technology. This includes social media, websites, online forums, communities, comments, and in apps and other device features. Teaching children and teens digital citizenship skills can help to prevent cyberbullying and its negative effects.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.
Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

- Internet Safety for Kids from *Goodwill Community Foundation* In this free tutorial, learn tips and strategies to keep your kids safe from hackers, predators, and cyberbullies.

- 23 Great Lesson Plans for Internet Safety from Common Sense Education This site provides activities on Internet Safety for grades K-12.

- Online Safety from *KidsHealth.org* (5th Grade) Many students are online often — using smartphones, iPods, and laptops. The Internet is a big part of their social lives. That's why kids need to understand how to make good choices when it comes to protecting themselves and their identities online. These activities will encourage students to think critically about online safety, including how much information to reveal and to whom.

- Online Safety from *KidsHealth.org* (6th - 8th) Middle schoolers are increasingly independent, social, and online. It's a recipe for fun, but it can also lead to issues. Students need to understand that impulsive behavior online can jeopardize their identities, reputations, and safety. Improper use of a computer can cause physical problems as well. These activities will encourage students to think critically about online safety.

- Online Safety from *Rights, Respect, Responsibility* By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1) Describe positive aspects of online talking and messaging. 2) Identify examples of flirting and chatting that can be inappropriate or risky. 3) Demonstrate an understanding of how to deal with uncomfortable situations when communicating online.

Self-Injury

Background Information

Non-suicidal self-injury, also known as self-harm, self-mutilation, or self-abuse is the act of deliberately harming one's body, such as cutting or burning in a way that is impulsive and not intended to be lethal. It is typically not meant as a suicide attempt; rather, this type of self-injury is a harmful way to cope with emotional pain, intense anger and frustration.

According to The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine, research indicates that self-injury occurs in approximately as many as 4% of adults in the United States. Rates are higher among adolescents, who seem to be at an increased risk for self-injury, with approximately 15% of teens reporting some form of self-injury. Studies show an even higher risk for self-injury among college students, with rates ranging from 17%-35%.

The most common methods are:

- Skin cutting (70-90%)
- Head banging or hitting (21%-44%)
- Burning (15%-35%)

Most people who self-injure are teenagers and young adults, although those in other age groups also self-injure. Self-injury often starts in the preteen or early teen years, when emotions are more volatile and teens face increasing peer pressure, loneliness, and conflicts with parents or other authority figures. Although life-threatening injuries are usually not intended, with self-injury comes the possibility of more-serious and even fatal self-aggressive actions. Getting appropriate treatment can help learn healthier ways to cope.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

a. Create a [positive classroom culture poster](#) to display in the room. Have students play an active role in creating the norms for a welcoming, positive and safe environment.

b. Create a classroom procedure to allow students to address grievances to avoid conflicts making sure all students have safe and positive peer connections.

- Make sure all students are connected with a trusted adult.
- Create opportunities for students to share their feelings. Discuss how those feelings interfere with their decisions and/or choices. This can be a private or public opportunity.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- [Self-Injury](#) This resource lists alternatives for help getting through difficult times.

- [Self-Injury: Learning to Ride the Wave](#) This resource suggests coping strategies that replace self-harming behaviors.

Other Resources:

- [Mayo Clinic](#) Gain a better understanding of self-harm and the symptoms, forms and causes leading to self-harm. Learn how to help others that self-harm, when to seek professional help, and complications of and prevention strategies for self-harm.

- [National Association of School Psychologists](#) A variety of mental health podcasts can be found at this link.

- [Self-Injurious Behavior](#) This resource includes recommendations for teachers and school psychologists on responding to self-injurious behavrior.

- [Mental Health America](#) provides insight into prevalence of, causes, warning signs, and diagnosis of self-injurious behavior. This resource includes possible treatment for and additional resources for self-injury and suicide.

- [S.A.F.E Alternatives (Self Abuse Finally Ends)](#) Classroom intervention tips are included here for intervening with students who self-injure.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- **Goal 3**: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. On Edge: Learning about Self Harm from *Mindreel* incorporate aspects of the following lessons to enhance student understanding of self-harm and introduce coping skills.
   o Understanding the Meaning of Self-Harm: Students will understand the meaning of self-harm and recognize life events that can lead to self-harm.
   o Dealing with Difficult Feelings: Students will recognize different feelings. Students will identify difficult and painful feelings. Students will understand that those feelings can lead to self-ham.
   o Exploring Stereotypes: Students will understand the meaning of the word *stereotype*. Students will identify who is at risk for self-harm. Students will understand that individuals use different coping skills.
   o Getting Help: Students will know how to help someone who self-harms. Students will know how to access professional help.

b. Controlling Your Urges--- with the 15 Minute Rule This exercise can help students with having a plan in place when faced with an urge that should be avoided.
c. Introduce communication exercises to encourage students to use communication to express emotions.
d. Use journals to express emotions through writing.
e. Introduce a Trigger Log – student tracks each time he or she engages in SI and the events leading up to it.
f. Teach Stress Management and Tension Release. Stay grounded.
g. Teach diaphragmatic and controlled breathing.
h. Teach and model meditation and visualization.

Stress and Anxiety

Background Information

The [National Institute of Mental Health](#) understands that life can be stressful. Students may feel stressed about school, community violence, or even current global pandemic. While these and other feelings may cause stress, it is important to know that everyone feels stress from time to time.

There is a difference between stress and anxiety and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH) provides this chart to help distinguish between the two.

Stress	Both Stress and Anxiety	Anxiety
• Generally is a response to an *external* cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend. • Goes away once the situation is resolved. • Can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire you to meet a deadline, or it may cause you to lose sleep.	Both stress and anxiety can affect your mind and body. You may experience symptoms such as: • Excessive worry • Uneasiness • Tension • Headaches or body pain • High blood pressure • Loss of sleep	• Generally is *internal*, meaning it's your reaction to stress. • Usually involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away, and that interferes with how you live your life. • Is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

Even though all people feel stress at some point, there may come a time when that stress is undermining their physical or psychological well-being. The NIH provides some clues to help determine if stress may be having a negative effect on youth.
- They develop physical symptoms like headaches and stomach pains.
- Appear restless, tired, and agitated.
- Seems depressed and is uncommunicative about feelings.
- Show Irritability, negativity, and little excitement or pleasure in activities.
- Seems less interested in an activity that was once extremely important and prefers to stay at home.
- Shows less interest than usual in attending classes and doing homework and grades are beginning to fall.
- Exhibits antisocial behavior such as lying and stealing, forgets or refuses to do chores, and seems much more dependent on you than in the past.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

- Use journaling to work through stress and anxiety.

- Download an app that provides relaxation exercises (such as deep breathing or visualization) or tips for practicing mindfulness, which is a psychological process of actively paying attention to the present moment. Use this during the day as a brain break.
- Add Exercise to the classroom routine, and make to eat healthy, regular meals.
- Encourage students to stick to a sleep routine, to make sure they are getting enough sleep.
- Reach out to friends or family members who help with coping in a positive way.

Environment: Providing an environment where students feel safe and cared for lays a foundation for supporting a child dealing with severe stress or anxiety. Any crisis or stressor will affect the functioning of the brain. As the Harvard Center for the Developing Child states, "Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy child development. When a child's stress response systems are activated within an environment of supportive relationships with adults, the psychological effects (of the stress) are buffered and brought back down to baseline." In other words, when a child feels anxious, their stress response increases to protect them in case they are in real danger. Having supportive relationships in a caring and positive environment helps children regulate their emotions and become more resilient and understanding of change.

Instructional practices can include ways to:
- As a class or for an individual assignment, define what stress and anxiety are. Share examples of positive stressors and negative stressors.
- Discuss the development of the teen brain and how stress and anxiety affect the brain.
- Teach students how to recognize anxious feelings.
- Help them develop coping strategies for anxiety.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources

Other Resources:

- Trauma-responsive Universal Online Modules The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Center for Childhood Resilience (CCR) at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and Peoria Regional Office of Education have partnered to provide a Virtual Learning Community (VLC) which provides free virtual on-demand training and

education resources to help educators, clinicians, parents, and caregivers better support the mental health and resilience of the children and youth in their communities.

- National Institute of Mental Health provides the following resources on stress and anxiety. Stress can come from any type of challenge including school performance, traumatic events, life changes, etc. Stress is how the brain responds to that demand. This resource from the National Institute of Mental Health includes five things you should know about stress, how it affects your health, how to deal with minor stressors, and when to seek help.
  - o My Mental Health: Do I Need Help? This fact sheet offers examples of mild and severe symptoms, self-care activities, and suggestions for finding help.
  - o Stress Catcher This stress catcher or "fortune teller" offers some strategies children can practice and use to help manage stress and other difficult emotions.
  - o 5 Things You Should Know About Stress This resource provides five things to know about stress, how it affects mental health, and what strategies can be utilized to help students cope.
  - o The Teen Brain: 7 Things to Know Included on this list are seven things to know about the teen brain.
  - o I'm So Stressed Out This fact sheet can assist in determining if feelings of being overwhelmed are stress or anxiety, and suggests tools students can use to help them cope.

- Dr. Bruce Perry – Emotional Contagion: Neurosequential Network Stress and Trauma Series This video discusses 'emotional contagion' and talks about the power of calm. The concept of power differential is discussed in context of human interactions and discusses the importance of calm, regulated leadership in times of stress and distress.

- Illinois State Board of Education's School Wellness and Mental Health Illinois State Board of Education's School Wellness and Mental Health provides resources for trauma, which affects student mental well-being causing emotional stressors. These stressors include anger, loss of motivation or attention, guilt, social withdrawal and isolation, physical illness, mental exhaustion. Even though it acceptable to experience these stressors, students must learn how to identify these feelings and use tools to promote self-care.

- Girlshealth.gov Created in 2002 by the Office on Women's Health, a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, offers girls reliable, useful information on health and well-being. This resource provides insight into various anxiety disorders and strategies to cope, promoting positive relationships and mental health.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- [Goal 2](): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. Create [visual schedules]() to help increase predictability. Visual schedules remind students what to expect throughout their day and reduce anxiety or worry surrounding the unknown.
b. Display posters around the classroom that introduce [positive self-talk]() and encourage the use of [coping skills]().

c. Provide students with an opportunity to choose how to demonstrate mastery of a topic by providing meaningful, relevant, and authentic options utilizing a [choice board]().

d. Use the [video scene]() from the movie, Inside Out, to discuss anxiety and depression.

Social Isolation

Background Information

Children are more likely to experience higher rates of depression and anxiety when socially isolated from their peers. This may continue even after the social isolation ends. Social isolation is the lack of connection between an individual and society, (i.e., a child separated from their friends during a pandemic). School closures, and the social isolation that accompanies the closure, may increase mental health concerns in youth. Social isolation, whether voluntary, involuntary, short, or long term, may impact the individual's mental health. Lack of connectivity in youth may also lead to negative self-esteem and fear of others.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

- Learn what students feel is most stressful and most helpful during stressful events by inviting them to share how their families and communities are dealing with the COVID crisis.
- Believe students' stories about family members and others in their community who did not receive hospital services or who have minimal access to technology to engage in school. Communicate empathy and concern when these stories are shared.
- Actively seek out resilient behavior from students and reframe cultural responses to stress to understand how it serves a purpose for managing crises or thriving after a stressful event.
- Provide support and guidance for staff to engage in conversations about how race, gender, socio-economic status, and other important identities are sources of both stress and strength for students during a crisis. Similarly, remain aware of how these social identities impact levels of stress and hopefulness among staff and students.
- Encourage staff to ask colleagues, students, and their families how to make the virtual classroom more welcoming to students and their families during times when in-person learning is not safe or possible.
- Actively seek to address inequities experienced by students of color within the school and healthcare system by encouraging staff to act as advocates for students' needs and to become particularly attuned to the most vulnerable student needs.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources

Other Resources:

- [UNICEF](#) Strategies are included here to help adolescents protect their mental health during COVID-19.

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) This fact sheet provides tips for coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreak. It describes common signs of stress and how to recognize when it is time to seek help.

- [USA Mental Health First Aid](#) The following resources from Mental Health First Aid include tips on managing mental health when feeling stressed during COVID-19, typical reactions to COVID-19 social isolation and how this experience changes thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and self-care strategies.
  - [Tips to Help Teens Cope During COVID-19](#)
  - [How to Manage Your Mental Health When Feeling Stressed During COVID-19](#)
  - [How to Care for Yourself While Practicing Physical Distancing](#)

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) Use the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's (NCTSN) "Creating, Supporting and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework," to consider how schools can adapt or transform their practices by using a trauma-informed approach to help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. It also provides trauma-informed school strategies during COVID-19.

- [Center for Childhood Resilience at Lurie Children's Hospital](#) Pediatric Psychologists from the Center of Childhood Resilience at Lurie Children's offer tips to help support children and/or teens through the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - [Support Your Child and Teen's Anxiety and Stress Related to COVID-19](#) In this blog, pediatric psychologists discuss supporting your child and teen's anxiety and stress related to COVID-19.
  - [Talking to Children and Teens about Difficult Situations, Tragedies and News Events](#) In this blog, pediatric psychologists discuss talking to children and teens about difficult situations, tragedies, and news events.

- [Sandy Hook Promise](#) This guide includes activities that are aligned to Sandy Hook Promise's *Start with Hello* and *Say Something* programs. These activities also boost essential social and emotional skills needed during times of social distancing. The activities can be shared with students and modelled by trusted adults.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. February 17th is Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) day. Work with students to introduce RAK week at the school the week leading up to RAK day. Share with students fun ways to celebrate and spread kindness throughout the year.
b. Implement inclusionary programs such as Sandy Hook's Start with Hello to reduce social isolation.
c. Implement conflict resolution programs such as Peer Mediators to allow student engagement and involvement in developing norms of behavior and behavioral responses.
d. October is National Bullying Prevention Month. Introduce weekly activities to "encourage schools, communities, and organizations to work together to "stop bullying and cyberbullying and put an end to hatred and racism by increasing awareness of the prevalence and impact of all forms of bullying on all children of all ages."
    o Encourage students to participate in #NOONEEATSALONE by making sure students do not let anyone at school eat alone in the cafeteria or on a school field trip.
    o Have an Anti-Bullying (Cyber or In-Person) poster contest or create an anti-bullying video and post it using #seeme.
e. Create a positive classroom culture poster to display in the room. Have students play an active role in creating the norms for a welcoming, positive, safe, and bully free environment.
f. Promote social well-being by incorporating social emotional lessons into all academic areas.
g. Create a classroom procedure to allow students to address grievances to avoid conflicts making sure all students have safe and positive peer connections.
h. Make sure all students are connected with a trusted adult.

i. Engage in activities to develop the social skills students need to help identify, address (Be an [upstander](#)), and prevent bullying.

j. Create opportunities for students to share their feelings. Discuss how those feelings interfere with their decisions and/or choices. This can be a private or public opportunity.

Safe2Help Illinois

9th-12th

The resources in this section of the toolkit are intended for high school students. These resources will allow students the opportunity to discuss various aspects of mental health and explore ways of taking action to support themselves and others in times of need through the following topics:

- **Call to Action**
- **Help Before Harm**
- **Suicide Prevention**
- **Anxiety**
- **Social Isolation**

Each of the topics include best practices for teaching and suggested resources. Check out the Safe2Help IL Teens Helping Teens - Learn, Understand, and Help webpage for videos that can help facilitate conversations.

Learning Outcomes and Competencies

All lessons derived from the use of this toolkit should connect to the Illinois Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards for high school as outlined in the documents below:

- Illinois Priority Learning Standards for the 2020-21 School Year - Social/Emotional Learning

- Grades 6-12 Social Emotional Learning Performance Descriptors

Call to Action

Background Information

High school students are often under a lot of stress to fit in, maintain good grades, choose a future career, and meet the demands of a high-pressure society. Academic-related stress can have significant impacts on students' learning capacity and academic performance, mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, sleep disturbances and substance use (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020). Among other worries, students may also have the additional stress of being in a setting in which sometimes the culture and climate is not optimal. It is essential that teachers are advocates for students whose work supports larger efforts for social change (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, and McQuillan, 2009). The "Call to Action" resources will help students develop awareness and skills to help respond in situations that may need de-escalation, whether it be bullying, school violence, or a mental health crisis.

Learning outcomes and competencies of educational materials highlighting "Call to Action" may focus on:

- Reducing negative consequences.
- Creating safer school environments.
- Promoting social justice and positive youth development.
- Encouraging and celebrating diversity and inclusion.
- Empowering students to speak up and speak out.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

- Promote a supportive school environment.
    - One way that educators can promote safer school environments is to develop lessons that avoid bias and include positive representations of diversity in people, history, and events.
- Find opportunities for visibility and inclusion of each and every student.
- Connect instructional materials to the Illinois SEL standards

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- [Controlling Your Urges--- with the 15 Minute Rule](#) This exercise can help students with having a plan in place when faced with an urge that should be avoided.

- [What is Safe2Help Illinois? Video](#)

- [Behind the Mask Video](#)

- [It's OK to Not be OK Video](#)

Other Resources:

- [Lesson Plans for Justice Reform: A Call to Action for Students and Teachers by *Vera Institute of Justice*](#) This resource provides strategies in preparing lesson plans on justice reform for high school aged students.

- [Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources](#) These robust, ready-to-use classroom lessons offer breadth and depth, spanning essential social justice topics and reinforcing critical social emotional learning skills. You can filter by grade level, domain, subject, or topic.

- [Teen Action Toolkit by *The National Center for Victims of Crime*](#) This toolkit, developed by The National Center for Victims of Crime and the U.S Department of Justice provides a blueprint for engaging youth in community problem-solving around the issue of teen victimization.

- [Teaching Social Justice in High School from *Learning to Give*](#) This resource guide includes video, literature guides, activities, and lessons that may be used in order or selectively. The discussions and lessons are intended to empower youth voice and guide them toward a service project of capturing someone's story through an audio recording and sharing it with others.

<u>Sample Classroom Strategies</u>

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. Call to Action Letter from *ProCon/Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.* Have students write a "call to action" letter about an issue that includes their positions on the issue, why individuals should act, and at least three things they should do to help the cause.
b. Social Justice by National Education Association (NEA) The purpose of the NEA Social Justice Lesson Plans is to share the stories of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Recipients. Through the sharing of their stories, educators can help students identify traits of these exemplary social justice leaders.
c. Teen Action by Global Kids Inc. This site contains a full spectrum of resources and lessons, including a plan to incorporate teen action at school, lessons on teambuilding, leadership skills, diversity, human rights, positive peer influence, and many others that can be used to incorporate lessons into the classroom. This resource is at no cost.

Help Before Harm

Background Information

Help before harm is a valuable topic that urges individuals to reach out for assistance before any harm can be done. This applies to someone who may be in danger of suicide, self-harm, bullying, school violence, or any other issue that may arise during their daily life. Reducing the stigma surrounding getting help may be one of the biggest hurdles to effectively overcome in making this an achievable task, which is why resources are provided in that area as well.

Below are facts:
- 1,000,000 students reported being harassed, threatened or subject to other forms of cyberbullying.
- 80% of school shooters told someone of their violent plans. 59% told more than one person.
- 70% of people who complete suicide told someone of their plans and gave some other warning sign.

The facts are telling the need of awareness around safety. People who are hurting, having thoughts of hurting others, or acting out ways that hurt others often believe that they have tried everything to stop the pain. However, pain and limited coping skills make it difficult to think clearly, consider options, or remember reasons to be kind to others and to themselves. Seeking professional help is a big step toward easing the emotional pain. But with help, people can and do heal and lead productive lives.

One of the challenges for teens is knowing what to report. One good way to gauge whether to report something is whether it makes them uncomfortable. If so, they should report it and leave it up to the school or a trusted adult to determine what the next steps are. Questions to ask are:

- "Do you think someone is going to harm themselves?"
- "Did you see something scary that concerns you online?"

Safe2Help: See Something Say Something outlines what students can do to help prevent dangerous acts from occurring. In addition, Sandy Hook Promise Shares 16 facts about gun violence and school shootings. Share these facts, know the signs, and act to protect students before it's too late.

1. Each day 8 children die from gun violence in America. Another 32 are shot and injured.
2. Firearms are the second leading cause of death among American children and adolescents, after car crashes.
3. Firearm deaths occur at a rate more than 3 times higher than drownings.
4. The U.S. has had 1,316 school shootings since 1970 and these numbers are increasing. 18% of school shootings have taken place since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December 2012.
5. In a comprehensive study of school shootings from 1974 to 2000 conducted by the Secret Service and Department of Education, 93% of school shooters planned the attack in advance.
6. In 4 out of 5 school shootings, at least one other person had knowledge of the attacker's plan but failed to report it.
7. Guns used in about 68% of gun-related incidents at schools were taken from the home, a friend or a relative.
8. A study found that 77% of active shooters spent a week or longer planning their attack.
9. Nearly all mass attackers in 2018 made threatening or concerning communications and more than 75% elicited concern from others prior to carrying out their attacks.
10. In almost every documented case of active shooters, warning signs were given.
11. 2018 had the most school shootings on record, but U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security research shows that if individuals "know the signs" of gun violence, it can be prevented and the trend can be reversed.
12. The majority of individuals with diagnosed mental illness do not engage in violence against others.
13. 70% of people who die by suicide tell someone their plans or give some other type of warning signs.
14. 39% of parents wrongly believe children don't know where a gun is stored.
15. An estimated 4.6 million American children live in a home where at least one gun is kept loaded and unlocked.
16. 7 states have enacted Extreme Risk Laws, the majority being implemented following the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Adults often find it difficult to keep up with all the emotional and physical changes adolescents experience. They may look more like adults than children, but don't think or act like their brains and actions are not as fully developed as an adult. Young people are figuring out who they are in comparison to their parents, siblings, and other important people in their lives. It can be difficult to distinguish between normal adolescent moodiness and more serious emotional

problems. Teachers who create a safe space for students to discuss what is happening in their lives and in the world around them increase their students feeling safer reporting issues of safety. Take the time to listen and remind students that overwhelming and confusing feelings are a normal part of being an adolescent and that it is okay to reach out on their own behalf or when they are concerned about another individual. Use current topics or issues heard in the halls to start conversations or incorporate into existing lesson plans.

Education materials should include information for youth and adults on how to recognize warning signs and signals of individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others. Materials should also include the importance of saying something and using the anonymous Safe2Help Illinois reporting system, before it is too late. What to report, when to report and to whom students and teachers should report issues or concerns are all critical components. Self-Awareness, Tips for Keeping Safe and Healthy, Mental Health Literacy and Internet Safety are also extremely important topics that should be discussed or addressed through educational materials.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- Bullying Students learn about the various forms of bullying and how to deal with a bully.

- Ways to Get Help lists various organizations that students, parents, and teachers can reach out to for help both nationally and across the state of Illinois.

- Self-Injury shares a list of alternatives for help getting through difficult times.

- See Something Say Something Students learn what to do to help prevent dangerous acts from occurring.

- Worried About a Friend Students learn what can be done to help a friend.

- Prevent School Violence Video

- *March For Our Lives*: Generation Lockdown Video

- *Sandy Hook Promise*: Gun Violence Warning Signs Video

Other Resources:

- [Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)](#) Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

- [Know the Signs: You Can Prevent Gun Violence And Other Harmful Acts](#) Sandy Hook Promise's proven *Know the Signs* programs teach youth and adults how to prevent school violence, shootings, and other harmful acts. Students and educators learn how to help identify at-risk behaviors and intervene to get them the help needed. These early-prevention measures empower them to keep their schools and communities safe. All resources needed are provided at no cost, including:
    - [Start with Hello](#) which teaches children and youth to minimize social isolation, empathize with others, and create a more inclusive and connected school culture.
    - [Say Something](#) trains students to look for warning signs and threats – especially on social media – of someone at risk of hurting themselves or others, and how to speak up to a trusted adult before a tragedy can occur.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. [Stand for Kind](#) Stand 4 Kind provides a way to replace negativity with positivity, by bringing kind actions and feelings into schools everywhere.

Suicide Prevention

Background Information

Suicide among the youth population has become a public health issue. Current statistics show that the suicide rate among adolescents and young adults aged 10–24 in the United States increased 57.4% from 6.8 per 100,000 in 2007 to 10.7 in 2018 (Curtin SC. State suicide rates among adolescents and young adults aged 10–24: United States, 2000–2018. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 69 no 11. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2020). In addition, there was a 41.4% increase in suicide death rates among youth aged 10–24 years in Illinois between 2007–2009 to 2016–2018. These statistics highlight the importance of supporting the mental health needs of youth across the nation and within the state of Illinois.

[The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#) (AACAP) describes suicide attempts within younger children as often impulsive. These attempts may be related to various feelings such as sadness, confusion, anger or problems related to attention and hyperactivity. In teenagers, suicide attempts may be related to feelings of stress, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, disappointment, and loss. Some youth may see suicide as a solution to these challenges.

The AACAP note that common risk factors associated with suicide are:
- Depression
- Family history of suicide attempts
- Exposure to violence
- Impulsivity
- Aggressive or disruptive behavior
- Access to firearms
- Bullying
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Acute loss or rejection

The AACAP also notes warning signs that are associated with suicide:
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Frequent or pervasive sadness
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Decline in the quality of schoolwork

- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Giving away prized possessions

Through increased awareness and preventative measures, youth are better informed on ways to cope with the challenges faced in adolescent years and better understand options for seeking help before harm. The resources below present ways to discuss suicide and suicide prevention with high school students.

Best-practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Youth who may be having thoughts of suicide may not formally seek help. Recognizing the warning signs is key in getting a student the help they need and keeping them safe. The National Association of School Psychologist provides actions to take when youth show signs of considering suicide:

- Remain calm.
- Ask the youth directly if he or she is thinking about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking of suicide?").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being and avoid being accusatory.
- Listen.
- Reassure them that there is help and they will not feel like this forever.
- Do not judge.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm.
- *Get help*: No one should ever agree to keep a youth's suicidal thoughts a secret and instead should tell an appropriate caregiving adult, such as a parent, teacher, or school psychologist. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources, as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional or administrator.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- Suicidal Thoughts Teens learn the warning sign of suicide personally and within others.

- Helping a Friend at Risk of Suicide provides a list of suggested actions to take when concerned about a friend.

- [The Hope Box: A Reason to Keep Living](#) walks through 3 steps in creating a Hope Box as reminder of reasons to live when facing tough times.

- [Creating a Safety Plan](#) allows students to outline personal strategies that can be used to deal with any negative thoughts and emotions.

- [Suicide Prevention Video](#)

Other Resources:

- [Illinois Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit by *The Illinois State Board of Education*](#) This document provides ready-to-use, practical procedures as well as guidance for modifying these procedures to fit the needs of districts and schools. It can be used as a toolkit for suicide prevention and intervention planning and serve as a resource in the identification process for staff members. Areas covered are as follows:
    - Developing and implementing promotional prevention activities (creating a safe and supportive school environment);
    - Identifying and implementing strategies to help identify students at risk of suicide; and
    - Outlining and implementing procedures for responding to students at risk for suicide.

- [Illinois Youth Resources for Mental Health, Well-Being & Resilience by *The Illinois Health and Hospital Association*](#) This guide has an emphasis on suicide prevention and marginalized youth. Included is a forum which is comprised of expert administrative and clinical professionals across the state. In addition to serving as a trusted resource, this guide is also intended to support community collaboration and coordination to enhance health and well-being.

- [Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents & Educators from the *National Association of School Psychologists*](#)

- [Save a Friend: Tips for Teens to Prevent Suicide from *National Association of School Psychologists*](#)

- [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) highlights help available to youth who may be struggling with negative feelings and taking care of self.

- [Health Problems Series Suicide Prevention by *The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth*](#) These activities will help students understand when and how to get help for themselves or classmates.

- [Preventing Suicide: The Role of High School Teachers](#) The Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides key steps to reduce suicide risk among students. This resource includes tips to identify who might be at risk, signs of immediate or serious risk, responses to at risk students, responding to a suicide death, and school wide suicide prevention.

- [National Safe Place](#) is a national youth outreach and prevention program for immediate help and safety.

- [Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide](#) provides teachers with free online training and resources for parents, educators, and teens.

- [Michigan's Holding On To Life Toolkit](#) contains information on: Why are adolescents so moody, What should I remove from my home right now, How do I know if a loved one is suicidal, Do I need to watch for suicide, How to handle the return to school, What should I say to a love one, Why am I feeling this way, and How should I help. It also includes a section on safety planning and a "My Safety Plan" worksheet.

- [The National Suicide Prevention Hotline](#) We can all help prevent suicide. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources, and best practices for professionals.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. [Suicide Prevention from PBS In the Mix/Metropolitan Life Foundation](#)
   - Have a guest speaker who has worked on a suicide crisis line speak to the class.
   - Have a guest speaker who treats suicidal students (psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, etc.) speak to the class.
   - Have students research teenage suicide statistics, comparing today with the previous 10, 20, or 30 years.

- Have students dialogue ways they express their sadness with their parents and have parents record the answers to hand in to the teacher.
- Have students list names of people who could help them when they are sad and look up their phone numbers.
- Discuss ways that students can stay "safe" (i.e., talk out their troubles with parent, teacher or trusted adult friend; stay away from dangerous firearms; get an officer when they are confused or lost, etc.).

b. PBS- Teaching resources for talking with teens about suicide
- Watch the video.
- Have a class discussion around the questions below:
  o Why is it important for young people to learn about suicide prevention and awareness?
  o What is the best way to learn how to talk about suicide? Keep in mind that for a long time, and even at present, adults and young people — for a variety of reasons — do not feel comfortable discussing suicide. What might change people's attitude towards talking about suicide and lessen the stigma around the issue?

c. PBS- How the news, Netflix and social media influence how schools talk about suicide
- Watch the video.
- Have a class discussion around the questions below:
  o How important is it to talk about suicide at school?
  o Why are mental health experts concerned about the media (i.e. Netflix, social media, Youtube, news outlets, etc.) sensationalizing suicide?
  o Youtube has policies that prohibit certain graphic material. Why were these policies created? What should happen if a person does not follow these policies?
  o Media literacy: What is vlogging? What are positive and negative effects of vlogging?
  o Given celebrity vloggers' popularity with young people, should they be held more accountable for their actions, particularly around sensitive issues, including suicide?
  o What should you do if you are worried about the mental health of yourself or a friend, including thoughts of suicide? Who are people you can talk with? Why is it important to talk with someone about your feelings?

d. Suicide Prevention from *Students Against Violence Everywhere*
Students will 1) Understand what suicide is; 2) Identify possible warning signs; 3) Gain an understanding of suicide prevention methods; 4) Learn how to respond in potential suicidal situations; and 5) Know who to talk to and where to get help.

e. Helping Friends Who Are Depressed or Suicidal from *The Samaritans of Rhode Island* Through these activities students will 1) Make responsible decisions regarding signs of depression and/or suicide; 2) Possess an understanding of the importance of communicating these signs to others;

3) Demonstrate, through role playing, the skills of "listening" and "befriending"; and 4) Read and comprehend informational materials to develop an understanding of suicide and prevention.

Anxiety

Background Information

Anxiety is a natural emotion experience by everyone. However, anxiety can sometimes become an unhealthy response. Research shows that there is a significant increase in the prevalence of anxiety among teens. The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) notes that sometimes, anxiety can become chronic, interfering with a teen's ability to attend school and perform academically. Research also shows that chronic anxiety can lead to serious mental health issues—depression, substance use, and even suicide (American Academy of Pediatrics).

The National Institute of Health highlights the following statistics regarding U.S. adolescents aged 13-18:
- An estimated 31.9% of adolescents had any anxiety disorder.
- Of adolescents with any anxiety disorder, an estimated 8.3% had severe impairment.
- The prevalence of any anxiety disorder among adolescents was higher for females (38.0%) than for males (26.1%).

There are various causes for the rise of anxiety seen in youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics highlights some of these causes below:
- **High expectations and pressure to succeed**. Between standardized testing and a culture of achievement, today's youth can feel pressure to succeed in ways previous generations did not.
- **A world that feels scary and threatening.** We've seen an increase in school shootings, with resultant drills and lockdowns in schools. We've seen shootings in public places. There have been terrorist attacks here in the US and around the world taking many lives. From just watching or reading the news, it is reasonable for anyone to feel afraid in public spaces that previously might have felt safe.
- **Social media.** Today's children and teens are constantly connected to social media. It's not surprising that their self-esteem—and worldview —becomes connected to responses to social media posts. It's hard for them not to compare their life and social connections to what they see others posting on social media.

Best Practices and Implications for Professional Practice

Anxiety can look different for each student. However, the AACAP notes that general symptoms include excessive fears and worries, restlessness, and extreme stress. There are ways to help

students facing the challenge of anxiety. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) provides these practices to help:

- **Be aware of the signs of anxiety.** Sometimes children may say that they are anxious, but other times it is less clear—especially as they may not even realize it themselves. Signs can include:
  - Recurring fears and worries about routine parts of everyday life
  - Changes in behavior, such as irritability
  - Avoiding activities, school, or social interactions
  - Dropping grades or school avoidance
  - Trouble sleeping or concentrating
  - Substance use or other risky behaviors
  - Chronic physical complaints, such as fatigue, headaches, or stomachaches.
- **Talk with kids about potential stressors.** Try to see the world the way they do—and help them to keep perspective and find ways to cope.
- **Be mindful of the expectations being set for children and teens.** High expectations can help children reach their potential, but they need to be realistic ones. Remember that children and youth need time to relax, play, and be with friends—all of which are crucial for their social, emotional, mental, and physical health. It's also important for all of us to remember achievement is only one part of a healthy balanced lfe.
- **Talk with kids about their social media use.** Help them take breaks—and help them think critically and rationally about the effect of social media on their lives. *See [How to Connect with Your Teen about Smart & Safe Media Use.](#)*

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- [99 Coping Skills](#) lists 99 skills students may use to manages moments of high anxiety.

- [Depression](#) This resource provides common symptoms of depression and actions youth can take in getting help.

- [Your Safety Your Plan Worksheet](#) This worksheet allows students to think through things that makes them sad and/or anxious and create an action plan for coping with these feelings.

Other Resources:

- [Child Mind Institute- What to Do (and Not Do) When Children Are Anxious](#) Lists 10 pointers for helping children escape the cycle of anxiety.

- [Child Mind Institute- Anxiety in the Classroom](#) lists different kinds of anxiety that children may struggle with.

- [KidsHealth for Teens 5 Ways to Deal with Anxiety](#) Everyone has feelings of anxiety, nervousness, tension, and stress from time to time. Here are 5 ways to help manage them.

- [KidsHealth Anxiety Disorders Factsheet (for Schools)](#) discusses what teachers should know and can do to help students coping with anxiety.

- [Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) School Wellness and Mental Health](#) ISBE's School Wellness and Mental Health webpages provide resources for trauma, which can impact students' mental well-being causing emotional stressors. These stressors include anger, loss of motivation or attention, guilt, social withdrawal and isolation, physical illness, mental exhaustion. Even though it acceptable to experience these stressors, students must learn how to identify these feelings and use coping strategies and tools to promote well-being and self-care.

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. [Classroom Prevention and Intervention](#) Teachers can employ a variety of activities to help prevent test anxiety in their classroom as well as address concerns students may have with taking tests. Many of these activities can be used on any given day in the

classroom, and these strategies can be adapted and utilized for all developmental levels of students.

- o Morning Meetings- Morning meetings can be used by teachers to implement an environment of safety and prevent an environment of anxiety.
- o Mindfulness- Learning mindfulness skills can:
  - Bring teens into the present moment through a reduction of focus on the past or future and more attention on the here and now;
  - Reduce rumination, "distorted" thinking, worries, negative self-talk, and judgments;
  - Increase letting go, empathy, patience, being with what is, and kindness toward self and others; and
  - Help focus on the self-regulation of attention, thoughts, and emotions.

b. Coping Skills- Anxiety
- This activity helps students question the thoughts that contribute to anxiety. Ask:
  - o "Is my thought based on facts or feelings?"
  - o "How would my best friend see this situation?"
  - o "How likely is it that my fear will come true?"
  - o "What's most likely to happen?"
  - o "If my fear comes true, will it still matter in a week? A month? A year?"

Social Isolation

Background Information

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students are experiencing an extended period of social isolation than before. This may have profound long-term impacts on students. Hanover Research provides mental health and physical health risks associated with social isolation:

- Long-term Mental Health Risks
    - Anxiety disorders
    - Alcoholism
    - Depression
    - Suicidal Tendencies
- Long-term Physical Health Risks
    - Inflammation and high CRP
    - High blood pressure
    - High cholesterol
    - Adult obesity

Understanding the effects and symptoms of social isolation in school-age youth can provide districts with tools to identify students at greatest risk and implement appropriate supports to mitigate the impact of the current crisis, both now and upon the return to school.

Children and adolescents are likely to experience high rates of depression and most likely anxiety during and after enforced isolation ends. This may increase as enforced isolation continues. Clinical services should offer preventive support and early intervention where possible and be prepared for an increase in mental health-related needs (Loades, Maria Elizabeth et al., 2020). Teachers may also play a beneficial role in supporting students through these challenges. According to Curtis in Edutopia, teachers are in the position to help build strong relationships with and between students to help them through these challenging times.

Best-practices and Implications for Professional Practice

National Child Traumatic Stress Network expresses the importance of educators incorporating the practices below in supporting students in times of social isolation:

- Establish a routine and maintain clear communication.
- Have relationships and well-being take a priority over assignment and behavioral compliance.
- Provide a sense of safety.

- Maintain connectedness.
- Encourage a sense of hope.

The Ohio Department of Education emphasizes the importance of relationships, building resiliency, supporting behavior, implementing trauma-informed practices, and adult self-care through times of social isolation. The Department offers ways for maintaining connectedness and a positive school climate:
- Create a sense of community virtually.
- Share positive actions and behaviors through announcements to uplift students and staff.
- Establish virtual opportunities to stay in contact with students.
- Create belonging routines such as classroom mottos or songs chanted at the beginning or end of class every day.
- Relationship building through personal sharing.
- Ensure mask comfort.
- Plan shared projects.

Suggested Resources

Safe2Help Illinois Website Resources:

- 99 Coping Skills lists 99 skills students may use to manage moments of high anxiety.

- 101 Positive Things to Say to Myself provides 101 positive things students can say to motivate and affirm themselves.

- It's OK to Not be OK Video

Other Resources:

- The Role of Peer Support in Ending Social Exclusion and Loneliness Webinar from Mental Health America This webinar explores:
  - Insights on mental and physical health effects of loneliness and social isolation.
  - How to identify discrimination against individuals with mental health conditions that can result in exclusion and loneliness.
  - How peer support can help individuals connect to their communities and establish friendships and personal relationships.

- Understanding Teen Loneliness and Social Isolation from Western Youth Services provides insight on how to help a struggling teen with isolation.

- [Mitigating Negative Impacts of Social Isolation to Prevent Violence: Information for Parents and Educators of School-Aged Children from the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention](#)

Sample Classroom Strategies

IL SEL Standards:

- [Goal 1](#): Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- [Goal 2](#): Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
- [Goal 3](#): Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Activities:

These activities can be used to address the Illinois SEL Standards.

a. **Implement inclusionary programs** such as [Sandy Hook's Start with Hello](#) to reduce social isolation.
b. **Journal/Writing Narrative prompts:** How can you help a friend who seems to be removing themselves from activities and connection?
c. **Institute a "Buddy" program** where students are connected and check-in with each other daily.
d. **Role Play Scenarios:**
    1. You text someone and they don't respond.
        a. What are some responses you may have/feel?
        b. Reframe the negative responses.
        c. What can be your next steps?
    2. A friend is acting different. They seem either angry or distant all the time. What might you say to them?
e. Class Discussions:
    1. Have students give examples of when a friend has isolated themselves. What has happened?
    2. Have students discuss the impact of social isolation on their well-being.
    3. Have students discuss ways to maintain connectedness.

Contact Safe2Help Illinois

Call	**Text**	**Web**
844-4-SAFEIL	844-472-3345	Online Tip

Email	**Download App**
HELP@Safe2HelpIL.com	App Store / Google Play

Encourage students to download the app!

Follow Safe2Help IL on Social Media

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