



Pennsylvania Department of Education

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Pennsylvania Recognizes 15 Postsecondary Institutions for Efforts to Support Student Mental Health and Prevent Suicide

The Pennsylvania Department of Education designated 15 postsecondary institutions as PA CARES campuses.

Harrisburg, PA – Today at Temple University, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recognized [15 postsecondary institutions](#) across the Commonwealth for their commitment to preventing suicide and promoting mental health and wellness for their learners. PA CARES is a newly created recognition that ensures postsecondary students have access to support, tools, and resources to learn and thrive.

“It is everyone’s responsibility to collaborate, cooperate, and connect to ensure Pennsylvania’s postsecondary students have access to safe and supportive learning environments, and the PA CARES initiative recognizes the school communities that are doing the work day in and day out,” **said Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education Dr. Lynette Kuhn.** “We applaud these 15 colleges and universities for recognizing the importance of coming together for the learners on their campuses, and proactively working to enhance mental health and prevent suicide.”

PA CARES, which stands for “Connect, Assess, Respond, Encourage, Support,” recognizes postsecondary institutions that have implemented [Act 110 mental health and suicide prevention plans](#), enabling school staff to engage with the campus community and empowering students to seek help when they need it.

Mental health support for students of all ages – K-12 through postsecondary education – has been a priority for the Shapiro Administration, which has invested \$200 million to help schools hire mental health counselors, provide other mental health resources to fit the needs of each unique school community, and invest in school safety and security. Earlier this year, through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s (PCCD) [School Safety and Security Grant Program](#), the Administration announced grant funding for school safety and mental health supports to more than 780 K-12 schools.

For postsecondary students, in 2024, PDE launched a new anti-stigma campaign to ensure students know it’s okay to ask for help. In October, [the department hosted school leaders, state officials, and advocates in Harrisburg](#) for the second annual PA MASLOW convening to support

postsecondary students in meeting their basic needs. Through the PA MASLOW [“You Good?”](#) campaign, PDE developed posters that colleges and universities can personalize, print, and post on their campuses directing students to critical resources. PDE convened student panel discussions around the state as a proactive way to inform the anti-stigma campaign as well as the programs and policies that postsecondary institutions are implementing.

The National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that there are 1,100 suicide deaths per year among college students across the country. According to researchers at Prevent Suicide PA, suicide is the second leading cause of death on American college campuses. It is critical that institutions of higher education (IHEs) proactively identify and implement policies, practices, and strategies for addressing mental health issues and preventing student suicide.

"Four of the schools recognized today are among the 530 colleges and universities that are currently participating or have completed our JED Campus program nationwide. [Research](#) shows that students in schools that finished JED Campus were 10% less likely to report suicidal ideation in the previous year, 13% less likely to report having suicide plans, and 25% less likely to attempt suicide as compared to program baseline," **said Martha Sanchez, director of policy at [The Jed Foundation \(JED\)](#)**. "JED applauds these institutions and the Pennsylvania Department of Education for today's significant recognition and for implementing life-saving steps to support and inform student populations about mental health resources available to them."

By partnering with over 1,200 high schools, colleges, and school districts – representing seven million students – JED is strengthening mental health, substance misuse, and suicide prevention programs and systems. It's equipping teens and young adults with the skills and knowledge to help themselves and each other. JED is also encouraging community awareness, understanding, and action for young adult mental health.

To become a PA CARES campus, postsecondary institutions must provide: contact information for national, state and local suicide prevention hotlines; crisis intervention services, including the address, telephone number, or any other contact information of individuals with training and experience in mental health issues who focus on suicide prevention; individuals with training and experience available on campus or remotely for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week; mental health services and access, including the necessary information to access mental health services, including, but not limited to, health promotion and wellness, student health and counseling, crisis services, local mental health providers and mental health clinics; multimedia access, including mental health and suicide warning signs, services available to individuals at no cost and available mental health and suicide prevention resources, which may include mobile applications; student communication plans that consist of outreach plans regarding, at a minimum, mental health services and suicide prevention; and post-intervention plans, including a process to create a strategic plan to communicate effectively with students, staff and parents after the loss of a student to suicide.

Institutions must also post the adopted plan on their website along with applicable free prevention materials or programs; provide all incoming students with the contact information for national, state, and local suicide prevention hotlines and crisis intervention services; transmit to each student by mail or email the contact information for national, state, and local suicide prevention hotlines and crisis intervention services no less than twice per calendar year; review and update the plan at least once annually; and submit a current copy of the plan to PDE by August 1 of each year.

If you or someone you know needs help, text, call, or chat with the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

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