



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
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Dear Massachusetts Educator,

We want to take a moment to express our sincere appreciation for the work you do each and every day. We tailored *The "S" Word: The Role of Schools in Preventing Suicide* to provide you with education and awareness about suicide prevention. We believe suicide is a significant and preventable public health issue in Massachusetts and across the nation.

According to Alan Holmlund, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Suicide Prevention Program, "Educators come into contact with youth on a daily basis and are uniquely positioned to observe and respond to student behaviors that might result in serious injury or death."

When youth die by suicide the impact of the death on parents, on friends and on the community is heightened. The topic of youth suicide is difficult to confront, but it is vitally important that school staff acquire a baseline understanding of the skills, vocabulary and strategies needed to support young people at risk of suicide and self-injury and learn how to make the appropriate referral.

To ensure that all school personnel in Massachusetts public and Commonwealth charter schools obtain suicide awareness and prevention training, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Suicide Prevention Program developed *The "S" Word: The Role of Schools in Preventing Suicide* for educators.

Upon completing *The "S" Word: The Role of Schools in Preventing Suicide* you will gain a better understanding of how suicide prevention fits with your role as an educator, increase your ability to recognize and identify students who may be at risk for suicide and promote protective factors that may prevent suicides from occurring. Lastly, you will learn skills on how to respond to students who may be at risk for suicide.

We thank you for choosing *The "S" Word: the Role of Schools in Preventing Suicide* as part of your school's professional development programming, and hope that you continue to work with us to prevent suicide.

Sincerely,

Brandy Brooks, MA, MS  
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