

SEPTEMBER'S SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH "TALKS AWAY THE DARK"

BCPS's Suicide Prevention Team organized and coordinated a robust calendar of events and activities throughout September to bring the subject of suicide out of the shadows.

In alignment with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) 2023 theme, "Talk Away the Dark," the highlight of the month was a district-wide recognition of Suicide Prevention Day on September 8, when all were encouraged to wear and decorate their classrooms in the sunny hue. Yellow is the official color worn worldwide in solidarity to strengthen prevention efforts and offer hope.

"We encouraged all staff members across the District to wear yellow in camaraderie, as we brought awareness to suicide prevention," said Suicide Prevention Coordinator ZaeVista Arnold.

Sharing how to make a potentially life-saving impact through suicide prevention across Broward County Public School students and parents has become more critical, as the suicide rate within the 15-19-year-old demographic increased by more than 40 percent between 2011 and 2020. Suicide Prevention Coordinator Vanessa Matute recognizes the important role schools, parents, and community members play. She encourages all to access educational resources, like AFSP webinars (**see More Resources sidebar**), to learn common risk factors and warning signs, how to initiate conversations about mental health, and how to get help.

"We want to ensure that everyone is aware and on board, as we push forward with our purpose to save lives," said Matute.

MORE RESOURCES

BCPS RESOURCES

TALK app (Clever dashboard) Mental Health Portal
<https://www.browardschools.com/mentalhealth>
Mental Health Hotline (754) 321-HELP

NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Suicide Crisis Lifeline: Text "home" to 741-741 or Call 9-8-8
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: afsp.org

AFSP Webinars

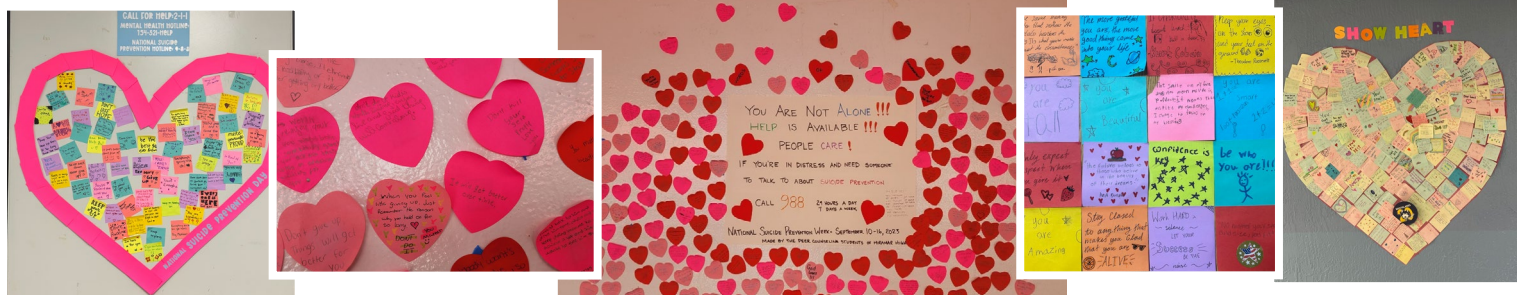
TALK SAVES LIVES: A Brief Introduction to Suicide Prevention (for community members)
Wednesday, October 4, 2023; 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Register: <https://tslflcsoct.attendase.com/>

MORE THAN SAD (for parents)

Wednesday, November 8, 2023; 6:30-8 p.m.
Register: <https://mtsnov.attendase.com/>

WORLDWIDE SUPPORT

<https://blog.frontiersin.org/2018/09/10/frontiers-in-psychiatry-supports-world-suicide-prevention-day/>



Pictured: On display as part of National Suicide Prevention Day were "Show your Hearts" projects from Bair Middle School, Millennium 6-12 and Westglades Middle School and hearts with positive messages, created by Peer Counseling students.

BROWARD SCHOOLS PROUDLY SUPPORTS 6TH ANNUAL MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

Broward Schools Mental Health Team was proud to be part of the planning committee for the Annual Broward Mental Health Summit. Returning for its sixth year on September 7th at Charles F. Dodge City Center, the event provided multiple pathways to essential knowledge, resources and support for healthier mental well-being.

More than 300 people, including a large delegation from Broward Schools, took advantage of the Summit's information, networking opportunities, sessions, meals and keynote address.

The Summit brought together leading mental health providers in South Florida from county, state and federal government, private practice, non-profits, and academia to discuss and examine the current issues relating to mental health in Broward County.



JOIN THE BCPS SUICIDE PREVENTION WALK TEAM



Represent BCPS and your commitment to preventing suicide by joining the District's team for the "Out of the Darkness" Broward County Walk on October 29, 2023, at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale. Starting at 9 a.m., the team will walk the 5K, raising money and awareness to support the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's mission.

"It brings camaraderie over something that is a tragedy, but we're also bringing awareness and people together to prevent future suicides," said Suicide Prevention Coordinator and 2022 Walk team member Antoinette Summers.

BCPS's Suicide Prevention Team is planning to award prizes to those who raise the most money. Last year's prizes included Publix gift certificates and tickets to the Museum of Discovery and Science.

To register, visit <https://supporting.afsp.org/team/323287>
Call 754-322-6689 for more information.



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NEW MHAART COORDINATOR ADVANCES CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Since Jayme Fuentes joined BCPS in June as the Crisis Mental Health Coordinator over the Mental Health Assistance Allocation Regional Team (MHAART), she has been focused on the golden rule of crisis management -- be proactive.

In order for schools, students, and their families to receive mental health support in the critical moments following a crisis, Fuentes is enhancing communication, coordination, and awareness. The seven social workers and seven family therapists she oversees previously reported to separate supervisors. Now, with all 14 under her leadership, communications are streamlined and roles are more integrated – critical components for effective crisis management and post-crisis care.

“While our social workers are looking to provide supports in the community and our therapists are supporting the family through counseling, they are working as a coordinated team to improve holistic care, making sure all are OK,” Fuentes said.

Fuentes is enhancing awareness of her team’s role among school principals, teachers, and school staff through an updated MHAART Crisis Plan, being shared with mental health professionals, school administrators and senior leaders. Understanding how, when, and where to engage her team before a crisis happens can save time and stress. The plan also includes services provided post-crisis for returning to normalcy and longer-term trauma support for a past crisis, tailored to each school community’s needs, as Fuentes recognizes that “recovery looks different for each school.” The plan also includes ways the team can support Principals’ preventative efforts to reduce risk of a crisis.

“Ideally you don’t want any crisis to happen; but if one does happen, we want the schools to feel supported,” Fuentes said.



“HELP IS HERE” MESSAGE SHARED WITH BCPS STUDENT BODY

Students at every grade level will know that “help is here,” thanks to a new campaign that informs them of available resources for support when they need it. “Help is Here” is the message being spread through posters, incentives and web-based public service announcements, distributed throughout the school system.

The communications initiative began at the end of the Spring term and is continuing into the new school year. Participating school staff will be given green lanyards to wear and participating students will be wearing black lanyards. The lanyards are branded with the website where students can learn what support services are available to them.

“We want to close the gap between what students know about the District’s mental health resources and what is really available,” Mental Health Coordinator Kimberly Young said. “There is a whole team, ready to aid students, staff and teachers, but some people only know about a fraction of what is really here to help them. ‘Help is Here’ was created to bridge that divide.”



MEET THE NEW SUICIDE PREVENTION TEAM

We recently welcomed three new Suicide Prevention Coordinators who are charged with:

- Collaborating with schools to implement suicide prevention strategies and curriculum
- Supporting the Suicide Risk Assessment process
- Analyzing Suicide Risk Assessment and Baker Act data by school and region
- Collaborating and connecting with mental health supports in the school and the community



Antoinette Summers

A word from Antoinette: "I see my job as bringing awareness and education to the topic of suicide, so that together we are all empowered to prevent it. I also want to empower both students and staff that their role in suicide prevention is invaluable. They both have very important parts to play."

Contact her at antoinette.summers@browardschools.com



ZaeVista Arnold

A word from ZaeVista: "I am honored to serve my students, staff, and communities in the area of suicide prevention. I believe mental health is wealth, and the passport to living a fulfilled life. Through intentional collaboration, connection, and best practices our students and staff will change the narrative of suicide prevention. We are living to tell the story."

Contact her at zaevista.arnold@browardschools.com



Vanessa Matute

A word from Vanessa: "As a Coordinator of Suicide Prevention, education and awareness, I look forward to opportunities to share my own knowledge and experiences related to mental health, suicide prevention, and crisis response. I am passionate and honored to increase individual and community resiliency. I look forward to working with students, faculty, parents, and the community to implement mitigation strategies and provide care and coordination."

Contact her at vanessa.matute@browardschools.com

MEET THE NEW MENTAL HEALTH TEAM



Kimberly Young

Mental Health Coordinator, Required Instruction

Responsibilities: Required Instruction, Community Partnerships and Student Initiatives.

A word from Kim: “My role is to ensure that all students receive age and developmentally appropriate instruction on the State’s required instruction, as well as build relationships with students, schools, families and community organizations.”

Contact her at kimberly.young@browardschools.com



Jayme Fuentes

Mental Health Coordinator, Crisis Response

Responsibilities: The District point of contact for when a crisis occurs, who coordinates and manages the MHAART (Mental Health Assistance Allocation Regional Team) to ensure implementation of preventative measures and provide support to Broward County Schools during and after a crisis.

A word from Jayme: “Our team will be able to provide ongoing training, support, and increase collaboration within the community to meet the mental health needs of our students and employees.”

Contact her at jayme.fuentes@browardschools.com



Shavonda Mitchum

Mental Health Coordinator, Youth Mental Health First Aid

Responsibilities: Coordinate and manage implementation of YMHFA trainings, ensuring that training sessions and resources are up to date, and all faculty and staff receive the necessary training to effectively support students facing mental health challenges. Develop strategies and trainings to raise awareness about youth mental health and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues. Collaborate with mental health teams to develop and implement appropriate intervention strategies for individuals in crisis.

A word from Shavonda: “My goal is to pave the way for awareness and compassion through strategies and trainings that guide us towards destigmatizing youth mental health challenges and embracing holistic well-being.”

Contact her at shavonda.mitchum@browardschools.com