

ACT 124

H.B. NO. 55

A Bill for an Act Relating to Youth Suicide Prevention.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that more children and young adults die from suicide each year than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, and chronic lung disease combined. Nationally, over four thousand youths take their lives annually, making suicide the third largest cause of death of persons between the ages of ten and twenty-four.

In Hawaii, suicide is the second leading cause of death among persons who are fifteen to twenty-four years old. Rates of youth suicide have been on the rise in the last decade among both females and males and among all ethnic groups. In Hawaii, males are more likely than females to commit suicide, and native Hawaiian youths are the most likely ethnic group to attempt or commit suicide.

Research demonstrates that youth suicide is linked to underlying mental health problems that can be addressed through early intervention and prevention strategies. The legislature notes that such intervention and prevention strategies have been listed as a national health priority in dealing with rising rates of youth suicide. Furthermore, Congress passed federal legislation in 2004, and appropriated \$82,000,000 over the next three years, for statewide programs designed to help prevent youth suicide. Many states have already developed comprehensive statewide youth suicide early intervention and prevention strategies that seek to provide effective early intervention and prevention services.

Suicide is a serious public health tragedy affecting children and young adults in Hawaii. The legislature declares that preserving and protecting the lives of children and young adults is a priority for the State. The legislature further finds and declares that preventing youth suicide is necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the State. Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to authorize the establishment of a youth suicide early intervention and prevention program for Hawaii.

SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

**“§321- Youth suicide early intervention and prevention program. (a)**

The department of health may establish and operate a statewide youth suicide early intervention and prevention program that focuses upon, but is not necessarily limited to persons between the ages of ten and twenty-four to:

- (1) Create public awareness for issues relating to youth suicide prevention;
- (2) Build community networks concerning youth suicide prevention; and
- (3) Carry out suicide prevention training programs for law enforcement personnel, health care providers, school and University of Hawaii employees, and other persons who have contact with individuals at risk of suicide.

(b) The department of health may provide appropriate research, training, and technical assistance to carry out the purposes of this section, including:

- (1) Providing oversight of youth suicide early intervention and prevention strategies;
- (2) Identifying and understanding causes and associated risk factors of youth suicide;
- (3) Analyzing the efficacy of new and existing youth suicide early intervention techniques and technologies;
- (4) Examining trends in youth suicidal behaviors and nonfatal suicide attempts;
- (5) Evaluating and disseminating outcomes and best practices of mental and behavioral health services at institutions of higher education; and
- (6) Other activities deemed appropriate by the director of health.

(c) Research, training, and technical assistance resources may be provided, but shall not be limited to:

- (1) Political subdivisions of the state;
- (2) Native Hawaiian health and community organizations;
- (3) Institutions of higher education;
- (4) The department of education;
- (5) Public organizations;
- (6) Private nonprofit organizations; and
- (7) Health and social service organizations.

(d) The department of health may develop and submit proposals for funding from federal agencies and private organizations to support the purposes of this section.

(e) The department of health may adopt rules in accordance with chapter 91 to implement the purposes of this section.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.<sup>1</sup>

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2007; provided that this Act shall be repealed on June 30, 2009.

(Approved June 4, 2007.)

**Note**

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.