



HB 1379: IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SUICIDE PREVENTION & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Nationwide, in the 2015-2016 academic year:

1.7% of students reported **attempting suicide**

Nearly **10%** of students seriously considered suicide

25% of students reported **academic difficulty** due to anxiety and/or depression

Approximately 550,000 students attend Washington's two-year and four-year public and private institutions. Of these, an estimated 6,000 attempt suicide, and an estimated 40,000 students have suicidal ideation. Most do not seek counseling.

Substance use compounds behavioral health issues. Nearly a quarter of 18- to 20-year-olds reported using an illicit drug in the past month. Nearly 40% of college students ages 18-22 reported binge drinking in the past month.

Provisions in H.B. 1379 include:

- **Creating a publicly available, statewide web-based resource** that provides the following:
 - A free recognition & referral training for faculty, staff, and students
 - Model crisis protocols by sector
 - Model marketing materials to promote behavioral health
 - Culturally relevant materials for underrepresented populations
- **Establishing baseline data collection** about behavioral health concerns and responses, so postsecondary institutions can better advocate for resources.
- **Forming a grant program for suicide prevention funding** to help resource-challenged institutions develop:
 - Basic infrastructure and strategic plans to support behavioral health and suicide prevention
 - Innovative partnerships with community crisis lines and others

Background: Washington State is a leader in addressing suicide as a public health issue. To reach its goal of lowering suicide rates, the state must prioritize comprehensive suicide prevention for postsecondary institutions, including early identification, prevention, intervention and postvention.

In 2016, a diverse group of stakeholders across each sector of higher education created an **analysis of needs** and recommendations for **systems-level solutions**. Lack of funding for behavioral health resources across all sectors was found to be the largest barrier for postsecondary institutions to address students' behavioral health challenges.