NEW JERSEY: Suicide Tally

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Inside Higher Ed [1]

Recently proposed legislation would require New Jersey colleges and universities to publicize statistics on their students’ suicide attempts and deaths. Language in the bill cites the importance of raising awareness about suicide, but many suicide prevention experts have raised concerns. Victor Schwartz, medical director of the campus suicide prevention organization the Jed Foundation, said the policy could unintentionally harm students at risk. “What rises as an immediate concern is that this may lead schools to overreact when they become aware of a student who has attempted suicide or has thought about it,” Schwartz said. “They might push them off campus, so as to not have their statistics look bad... Then once this starts to happen, you've created a situation where students won't want to reach out for help.” In order to minimize the risk of suicide contagion, it is also important not to publish news of suicidal behavior in a way that makes suicide seem like a “viable option,” said Dan Jones, chair of the Higher Education Mental Health Alliance.

Spark Extra! Learn how to communicate safely about suicides with the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's Framework for Successful Messaging [2].

Links within this resource

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