

# THE PIC

(Practical Ideas for Counselors)



South Dakota School Counselor Association—Welcome back !

September 2018



**Julie Nelson**

2018-2019 SDSCA President,

School Counselor  
Southwest MS, Rapid City

## SDSCA

The mission of the South Dakota School Counselor Association is to unite, support, and empower school counselors.

### *Our Vision:*

The South Dakota School Counselor Association supports and unites school counselors through advocacy, leadership, and collaboration. SDSCA empowers our members through professional development opportunities, ethical support, and resources to promote student success in the academic, career, and social/emotional domains.

## ASCA Position Statements & YOUR School Counseling Program

As you prepare for this year constructing a calendar, reviewing data, setting SMART goals and meetings with your principal & advisory board, take a moment and familiarize yourself with the position statements located on the ASCA [website](#).

These hidden gems have been developed by like-minded school counselors & counselor educators who have a passion for clarifying support on issues pertinent to school counselors. Topics range from [safe schools and crisis response](#) to [suicide prevention & awareness](#). The position statements will help you navigate through a variety of gray topics and will give you the support you need to successfully advocate. School counselors in all stages of developing a comprehensive school counseling plan should take a look and keep them handy for those moments in the profession when they can be useful.

On that note, with our September newsletter theme focusing on Suicide Prevention & Crisis Plans, please turn to pages 2 & 3 for pertinent information on these topics from two of our board members, Anna Eidem & Jennifer Kirchner. All the best in your respective school districts across South Dakota as you begin another year doing work that matters!

## SDSCA Mentor Program

Are you new to the school counseling profession or new to South Dakota? Apply to participate in SDSCA's Mentor Program by [clicking here](#). This membership benefit can help connect you with an experienced school counselor who can share wisdom, resources, and experience with you! If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please

[click here](#).

Questions? Contact Mentoring Chair Danielle

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AND MORE!

# National Suicide Prevention Week

## September 9-15, 2018

*This month is suicide prevention awareness month and I hope you take the time to review what you can do about suicide prevention in your schools. This is a time for us to share resources and stories, as well as promote suicide prevention awareness. —Anna Eidem*

As school counselors, we know all too well, how deaths by suicide affect our families, schools, communities, state and nation. Based on most recent data, suicide is the 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in South Dakota and the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in people ages 15-44. There are several resources available and tools to use and I will share some from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

One way to get involved in suicide prevention is to advocate at the local, state and national level. Building relationships and staying connected to our state and national legislators' gets the message across that we need to make suicide prevention a priority right now. By signing up as advocate, you will be joining thousands of other volunteers to prevent suicide. You will receive emails from the AFSP Public Policy Team in Washington, DC that are updated on the latest policy news and events, and action alerts so you can know when and how to take action on the policy issues you care about. To sign up go here: <https://afsp.org/our-work/advocacy/become-an-advocate/#/signup/go/id/93F69D0B-A17F-71F6-65506749AE8AC29C/>

There are several resources specifically for schools including the following:

The Model School Policy for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/model-school-policy-suicide-prevention/>

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools (Revised edition): <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/after-a-suicide-a-toolkit-for-schools/>

More Than Sad: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/more-than-sad/>  
(FREE curriculum to school districts, complements of SD Chapter of AFSP)

Talk Saves Lives presentation: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/talk-saves-lives-introduction-suicide-prevention/>

It's Real: College Students and Mental Health: <https://afsp.org/our-work/education/real-college-students-mental-health/>

(Contact the SD Chapter of AFSP for this program)

### Upcoming Out of the Darkness Community Walks

9/8/2018: Aberdeen & 9/15/2018: Huron

9/22/2018: Sioux Falls & Black Hills

9/29/2018: Milbank [You can register for the walks here](#)



SDSCA Counselor  
Connections  
Chair

School Counselor  
Tea Area Middle  
School

Anna Eidem

## Mark Your Calendar:

- ♦ **September 28-30**– ACA Midwest Council “Confidence, Attitude & the Inner Voice of a Leader”. in Sioux Falls. Visit [here](#) to register.
- ♦ **November 2 & 3**– SDSCA presents the 10th Annual Counselor Connections Workshop in Brookings. [Click here to register.](#)
- ♦ **February 2019**– SDCA Day on the Hill in Pierre. Look for details coming soon about this advocacy opportunity with state lawmakers.
- ♦ **February 4th-8th**– National School Counseling Week! Start planning to celebrate and advocate for you, your program, and the profession by [clicking here to visit ASCA's NSCW page!](#)
- ♦ **May 2-4**– 2019 SDCA Conference in Sioux Falls. More information coming soon to the [SDCA Website.](#)
- ♦ **June 29-July 2, 2019**– “Revolutionary Ideas” ASCA Conference in Boston, MA. Online registration opens January 2019.

WALK TO  
FIGHT  
SUICIDE



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR  
Suicide Prevention

OUT OF THE DARKNESS  
Community Walks

*Crisis is a word that can often spike anxiety and fear in our students. School counselors do their best every day to advocate and protect students from the harsh realities some are forced to face in their young lives. Being in the field of education, we plan and practice for situations outside of our control. From fires and tornados to active shooter situations, we know what to do and we've been trained to respond. Why should a crisis be any different? Why wouldn't we have an action plan for when the unthinkable happens? Our profession does not have the luxury to talk about "if" a crisis will occur but "when."* —Jennifer Kirchner



**Jennifer Kirchner**

SDSCA Publications Co-Chair

School Counselor

# ASCA Crisis Resources Available [Here](#)

## In Closing:

**When counselors are faced with responding to an unthinkable crisis, it does not have to be an overwhelming situation. Our crisis plan is not meant to dehumanize the event that has occurred, but serve as a framework to help guide those responders who may also be struggling with loss. From experience, having a crisis plan can bring peace of mind that we can do our best work on the hardest days.**

## Creating a Crisis Plan after Tragedy

**Tragedy Strikes** In the fall of 2015, Yankton High School had just that. An unthinkable tragedy. One of our students had died by suicide. Those first couple days are still a blur, but as a counseling team, a staff, a school, and as a district, we served our grieving students in their time of need. Reflecting back, we also learned a lot about how to assist our students and staff during a crisis.

As the months passed following that day, our counseling department started to look at our old crisis plan. The one nobody had needed to look at for so long. While every district has a crisis plan suitable to their needs, we found that several pieces of our document helped take the thinking out of the equation. Our crisis team could assemble and respond with a single phone call instead of asking the question, "What do we do now?"

**Crisis Team** One of the first few questions we asked was, who is on our crisis team? Are there certain community members that may help with those affected by the death of this student? Who is privy to the facts of the situation? During a crisis, I have found having the facts invaluable in order to quell the rumors and side talk that simply are not true. As we know, many times, students have half of the story, especially when emotions are high.

**Roles and duties** In order to carry out an action plan effectively, we decided that certain team members would have duties that would facilitate another team member's duties to start, almost like a calling tree. For example, our Superintendent is usually the first person to know a tragedy has occurred. He then notifies the crisis team and we meet at a designated time and place to discuss our action plan and emergency checklist. After that, the action plan is dictated based on the school and its resources, the age of the student, the family's wishes, and the facts of the situation.

**Emergency Checklist** One of pieces we felt important was a checklist of items that needed to be taken care of once the team had confirmation that the death of a student had occurred. For example, did the student ride the bus and the driver needed to be informed, did the student have a desk he or she sat in; or did the family have specific wishes we needed to be aware of? Many of the items on our checklist are decided at our initial meeting before the action plan goes into effect.

**Action plan** Our action plan was divided into "Day 1" and "Day 2". During Day 1, the crisis team would meet early in the morning prior to a mandatory staff meeting. The team would discuss the emergency checklist, the facts, review team member responsibilities, and identify those students most affected. If possible, counselors would meet with identified students prior to an announcement being made to the student body. During the course of the day counselors would respond to students as the need arose. Once school had ended, the team would reconvene to discuss the day, concerns, and compile a list of students served for reference, and highlight self-care.

**Day 2** refers to the next day, but also the path to move forward after tragedy. Counselors would continue to meet with students as needed making note of special days and anniversaries that could trigger those affected students. The school would support the family as they needed and later on, discuss a memorial if ap-

## It's Not Too Late...

September 28-30th ACA  
Midwest Institute for Leadership  
Training: "Confidence, Attitude  
& the Inner Voice of a Leader".  
Join with leaders from across  
the Midwest to learn new  
leadership skills and hone  
existing ones!

[Register here](#)

## Counselor Connections 2018

SDSCA is pleased to present the 10th annual Counselor Connections Workshop, November 3rd and 4th on the SDSU Campus in Brookings! Counselor Connections is a professional development event presented by school counselors, for school counselors.

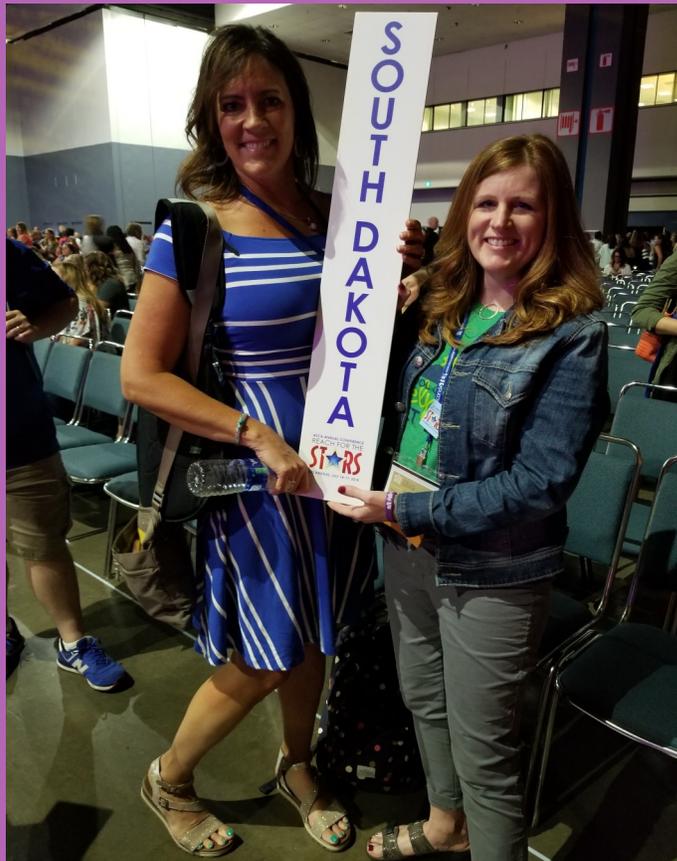
[Click here to register today!](#)

This year promises to have pertinent school counselor sessions to help you in your job setting on the following topics: ACES, zones of regulation, mindfulness, advocacy, leadership, confidentiality & privilege, advocacy & opioid use intervention to name a few!

\*A block of rooms has been reserved for November 1 & 2 at the Brookings Hampton Inn & Suites. You can reserve online [here](#) or call 605-697-5232. \*Block held until Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup> and then released to the general public.

## NEXT MONTH:

Our ASCA partnered newsletter explores



Eleven SD school counselors attended the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Conference in Los Angeles, California in July. We spent time learning, networking and representing our state! Shortly after this, members of the state leadership team gathered in Presho for a quick 24 hours at our summer board retreat creating a strategic plan, budget and goals for the upcoming year as a state school counselor organization. The strategic plan is

