

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 14, 2010

CONTACT: ERIN MACINNES
(850) 488-9557

**GOVERNOR CRIST SIGNS LAW TO PROMOTE SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING
AMONG SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

~ Governor Announces New Measure to Educate School Personnel and Safeguard Youth~

TALLAHASSEE- Governor Charlie Crist signed into law Senate Bill 434, sponsored by Senator Sobel, and House Bill 1061, sponsored by Representative Heller. This legislation adds suicide prevention education to school districts' In-Service Master Development Plans as an option for school personnel to fulfill their individual professional development plans. Certificated personnel may use in-service points for re-certification purposes. The new legislation does not mandate training, nor does it cost anything, as there are numerous free, online trainings and in-person trainings that school personnel can utilize.

Currently, a few school districts already include suicide prevention education in their district In-Service Plans. This legislation will afford the opportunity statewide to all school personnel. A page on the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention's Web site, www.HelpPromoteHope.com, is dedicated to connecting school districts to suicide prevention education.

"Teachers and other school personnel are one of the first lines of defense when it comes to protecting our youth and ensuring their well-being. This legislation is a step in the right direction to increase the public's awareness of suicide prevention," said Governor Charlie Crist.

Nine out of ten adolescents who die by suicide give clues to someone before they attempt. School personnel are key gatekeepers in a young person's life. They interact with students on a daily basis and are likely to notice changes in behavior or attitude. Many suicidal students will likely go to a teacher, coach or janitor before they go to a school counselor. Yet, those individuals often lack the training to deal with these issues. Schools often train their teachers how to react to suicides but not how to prevent them. The legislation will provide more opportunities for the significant people in young persons' lives to develop the skills needed to recognize warning signs and act on them.

In 2008, 2,723 Floridians died by suicide; 231 of these deaths were youth. Suicide is a preventable widespread public health problem that affects people at all levels of society. It is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24. Across the United States each day, approximately 11 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 die by suicide.

The 2007 Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports that 204,100 students surveyed in grades 9-12 have experienced possible clinical depression in the past 12 months, 88,400 considered suicide, 63,800 made a plan to commit suicide and 39,200 reported they had made an attempt.

The Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention was established in law in 2007 and is charged with guiding Florida's suicide prevention efforts by developing mechanisms for implementing the *Florida Suicide Prevention Strategy*, providing oversight, building capacity, creating policy, and mobilizing communities, with the overall goal of lowering suicidality and improving quality of life for Floridians.

###