

## *Conecuh County Annual Erin's Law & Jason Flatt Training for Students, Parents, & Staff*

Erin's Law is named after a childhood sexual assault survivor named Erin Merryn. This law was passed in her hometown of Illinois and has since been passed in 37 other states, Alabama being one of them. This law requires all public schools to implement prevention oriented child sexual abuse programs and education that will teach students Pre-K-12<sup>th</sup> grades, school personnel, and parents how to recognize child sexual abuse/assault and tell a trusted adult. In regards to Erin's Law, we know that someone touching our private areas is a NO, NO and is very inappropriate. This can make you feel uncomfortable, nervous, or even afraid. If this has happened to you, you should tell a trusted adult immediately. Just remember that all private parts are OFF LIMITS and you shouldn't be forced to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you know is wrong. Taking pictures of your private areas is also child exploitation and is against the law, so don't let someone take pictures of your private areas and you shouldn't take pictures and send them to someone else either. Research shows that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused by the age of 18 and it is usually done by someone the child knows. Some possible examples or warning signs of child sexual abuse/assault are: bruises, change in appetite, changes in grades, aggressive & defiant towards others, keeping secrets, inappropriate bedwetting, and much more. [www.erinslaw.org](http://www.erinslaw.org)

The Jason Flatt Act was signed into law by Governor Robert Bentley on May 10, 2016, that would require all public school employees to receive annual training in suicide awareness and prevention. In addition, each public school are required to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention and shall be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts. The procedures should be related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. This act was initiated by Carl Flatt, father of Jason Flatt, after 16-year old Jason died by suicide on July 16, 1997. Because suicide is one of the leading deaths of youth and is considered a "Silent Epidemic," Carl Flatt was passionate about this law with the hope of spreading awareness and incorporating prevention strategies to help save a life of a young person. Research shows that 4 out of 5 individuals have considered suicide and usually give some kind of sign of their intention either behaviorally or verbally. Some examples are: verbal threats of suicide, depression, trauma, lack of interest, increased anger/irritability, sudden change in appearance, sudden change in appetite, preoccupied with death or suicide, suicidal thoughts, previous suicide attempts, poor academic performance, giving away prized possessions, making final arrangements, and much more. Some of these observations does not always conclude that a personal is truly suicidal, but it definitely could mean they are struggling with issues in their lives and could use some help or extra support. The key is to not ignore the signs and reach out to help! For middle and high school age youth (ages 12-18), suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death. For college age youth (ages 18-22), suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death. Overall, suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. All suicide threats, ideations, and attempts should be taken seriously. Seek more appropriate help from the school counselor, school social worker, school nurse, or administrator if this occurs. If someone is experiencing a crisis: call 911, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text "Jason" to 741741. [www.jasonfoundation.com](http://www.jasonfoundation.com)

