**Suicide Prevention**

**Muna Javaid, LMSW**

**Senior Planner, Integral Care**

This September, as fall approaches and students head back to school, it is a good time to focus on campus-based mental health services, and recognize National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/SuicideYouth.html), suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24, and results in approximately 4,600 lives lost each year. This month is an opportunity for mental health advocates, prevention organizations, survivors and community members to unite to promote suicide prevention awareness and help save lives.

Teachers and parents can play an important role in early detection of warning signs and behaviors indicating that a child is considering suicide. Trouble focusing or thinking clearly, increased withdrawal from family, friends, and school, a lack of interest in favorite activities and reckless or risk-taking behaviors are just a few of the signs that indicate suicide risk. Considering students spend a significant portion of their day in school, on-campus mental health services create an opportunity to proactively identify and engage youth in critical, supportive services.

Integral Care, the Local Mental Health Authority for Travis County provides individuals with high quality integrated trauma-informed behavioral health care, and collaborate with community partners to strengthen programs and systems, and work to raise awareness of mental health issues in our community.

In 2013, as part of the 1115 Waiver Initiative, Integral Care launched the Integrated Care in Schools project, providing 18 on-campus therapists to Manor, Del Valle and Pflugerville Independent School Districts. For academic year 2016-2017, 2,595 youth enrolled in AISD received behavioral health services through the initiative, including suicide screenings. A total of 684 students received comprehensive assessment and psychotherapy services.

Trauma-informed, mental and behavioral health services on campuses are essential to wellness and early detection of a child considering suicide. This month, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with community resources such as mental health centers, school programs, or other prevention resources such as the Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Community supports are vital to our youth to getting the appropriate help as soon as possible.