



SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS FOR STAFF

SUICIDE is a serious public health problem that takes an enormous toll on families, friends, classmates, co-workers and communities, as well as on our military personnel and veterans. School communities are responsible for providing an effective initial response to potentially suicidal students, and knowing when and where to refer students for additional assistance.

SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTABLE

Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs are observable behaviors that may signal the presence of suicidal thinking. They might be considered “cries for help” or “invitations to intervene.”

These warning signs signal the need to inquire directly about whether the individual has thoughts of suicide. If such thinking is acknowledged, then suicide interventions will be required.



- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness
- Significant changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts, and/or feelings
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Suicide threats (direct and indirect)
- Suicide notes and plans
- History of suicidal ideation/behavior
- Preoccupation with death
- Making final arrangements (e.g., giving away prized possessions, posting plans on social media, sending text messages to friends)

Suicide Risk Factors

While the path that leads to suicidal behavior is long and complex, and there is no “profile” that predicts suicidal behavior with certainty, there are certain risk factors associated with increased suicide risk. In isolation, these factors are not signs of suicidal thinking. However, when present they signal the need to be vigilant for the warning signs of suicide.

- Access to means (e.g., firearms, knives, medication, chemicals)
- Experience of stressful life events
- Stressors (e.g., loss, peer relations, school, gender identity issues)
- History of depression, mental illness or substance/ alcohol abuse disorders
- History of suicide in the family or of a close friend
- History of mental illness in the family
- Exposure to another’s suicide (via media, community, etc.)

Here’s What You Can Do:

LISTEN

- Be aware of warnings and risk factors.
- Listen without judgement. Ask open-ended questions.
- Remember every threat must be taken seriously.

PROTECT

- Take action immediately.
- Supervise, do not leave the student alone.
- Student must remain under adult supervision at all times.

CONNECT

- Connect with your students to build relationships. A caring relationship with a trusted adult can contribute to resiliency and reduce the risk of suicide.
- If you have concerns about suicide, immediately contact a counselor, principal or assistant principal.

MODEL

- Remain calm. Establish a safe environment to talk about suicide.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions as you listen without judgement.
- Practice self-care.

TEACH

- Encourage help seeking behaviors and help them identify adults they can trust at home and at school.
- Encourage development and use of healthy coping skills.





Understanding Suicide: Myths & Facts

To understand why people die by suicide and why so many others attempt to take their own lives, it is important to know the facts. Please read the facts about suicide below and share them with others.

MYTH: *Suicide happens mostly in troubled individuals who come from difficult family situations.*

FACT: *Suicidal behavior occurs across all social economic groups, ages, faith, and cultures. Adolescents experiencing suicidal thoughts come from all backgrounds—rich and poor, happy and sad, two parent/single parent households, etc. Suicide can happen in any family. Working together to identify and prevent suicidal behavior is important.*



MYTH: *Most suicides happen without any warning signs.*

FACT: *There are almost always warning signs, but without awareness we don't always know what to look for or how to recognize them. This is why suicide prevention education is so important. Research indicates that in over 80 percent of deaths by suicide, a warning sign or signs were present and were not recognized.*

Myth: *Suicide can't be prevented. If someone is set on taking their own life, there is nothing that can be done to stop them.*

Fact: *Suicide is preventable. The vast majority of people contemplating suicide don't really want to die. They are seeking an end to intense mental and/or physical pain. Most have a mental illness. Interventions can save lives.*

Myth: *Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide will put the idea in their head and cause them to act on it.*

Fact: *When you fear someone you know is in crisis or depressed, asking them if they are thinking about suicide can actually help. By giving a person an opportunity to open up and share their troubles you can help alleviate their pain and find solutions.*

Myth: *Someone making suicidal threats won't really do it, they are just looking for attention.*

What do I do if I have a concern about a student?

Suicide Warning signs are serious calls for help. Acknowledging those warning signs can help prevent suicide.

School employees who identify a student as expressing the desire to harm themselves or others are **REQUIRED** to **IMMEDIATELY** contact:

- Counselor or Intervention Counselor
- Principals, Assistant Principals

The student is to remain under adult supervision at all times.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION AFTER HOURS CONCERNS

Contact an administrator if you have a significant concern about a student after school hours.

If you need immediate assistance regarding a personal matter, **call 911!**

Fact: *Those who talk about suicide, or express thoughts about wanting to die, are at risk for suicide and need your attention. Most people who die by suicide give some indication or warning. Take all threats of suicide seriously. Even if you think they are just "crying for help"—a cry for help, is a cry for help—so help.*

Myth: *Talk therapy and/or medications don't work.*

Fact: *Treatment can work. One of the best ways to prevent suicide is by getting treatment for mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar illness and/or substance abuse and learning ways to solve problems. Finding the best treatment can take some time, and the right treatment can greatly reduce the risk of suicide.*

If you or someone you care about is at risk for suicide, help is available.

Resources for Additional Information

COMMUNITY HOTLINES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(800) 273-TALK (8255) 24HOURS

Teen Line
(800) 852-8336 (6-10pm daily)

MHMR of Tarrant County
(800) 866-2465 or (817) 335-3022

Text and Chat Resources:
Text the crisis line anytime at 741741