

Suicide Prevention Awareness For Parents/Caregivers

Suicide Is Preventable

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, helplessness, and hopelessness.
- Significant changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts, and/or feelings
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Suicidal threats (direct and indirect)
- History of suicidal Ideation/behavior
- Preoccupation with death
- Making final arrangements (e.g., giving things away, posting plans)

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. Suicide prevention is the collective efforts of local community organizations, mental health practitioners and related professionals to reduce the incidence of suicide through education, awareness, and services.

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)
- Stressors (e.g., loss, peer relations, school, gender, identity issues)
- History of depression, mental illness or substance/alcohol abuse
- History of mental illness in the family

Here’s What You Can Do

Listen

- Assess for suicidal thought
- Listen without judgment
- Ask open-ended questions

Protect

- Take action immediately
- Supervise, do not leave you child alone
- Consider developing a safety plan at school and home, if needed.

Connect

- Communicate and collaborate with your child’s school administration, mental health personnel or counselor for support
- Contact Department of Mental Health, law enforcement or protective services, as needed
- Help you child identify an adult, or adults, they trust at home and at school

Model

- Remain calm. Establish a safe environment to talk about suicide
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions as you listen without judgement
- Consider developing a safety plan at school and home, if needed.

Teach

- Learn the warnings signs and risk factors and provide information and education about suicide and self-injury.
- Encourage help seeking behaviors and help your child identify adults they can’t trust at home and at school
- Seek options for school and community resources including referrals to professional mental health services, as needed