

2011 Required Notice of Youth Suicide Prevention Resources

More youth suicide prevention resources are available at: dpi.wi.gov/sspw/suicideprev.html

New Youth Suicide Prevention Resources Are Available For Use

To find out more information on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention resources, check out DPI's updated website. There are downloadable documents on the state laws, a fact sheet on youth suicide, and updated suicide prevention curriculum. It also includes a webinar of online gatekeeper training for staff and DPI's updated one-day training flyer, description, and calendar. Other resources include strategies on suicide interventions, memorial suggestions, and other links.

Know the Signs

Suicide doesn't usually just happen out of the blue—there are some warning signs to watch for. Know the signs of suicidal thinking, of your students, friends, and family members.

Suicide Prevention: Warning Signs

- ◆ Threatening/talking about hurting self
- ◆ Hopelessness
- ◆ Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- ◆ Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- ◆ Feeling trapped – like there's no way out
- ◆ Increased alcohol or drug use
- ◆ Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- ◆ Anxiety, agitation, change of eating/sleeping habits
- ◆ Dramatic mood changes
- ◆ No sense of purpose in life
- ◆ Decline in quality of school work
- ◆ Giving away prized possessions

From American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

Suicide is a Complex Problem

There are multiple factors involved in a suicide completion. Oversimplifying the reasons why someone completes suicide is not helpful. For instance, saying someone completed suicide due to bullying is not all-encompassing. Not all people who are bullied complete suicide. Research suggests that there are many factors contributing to suicide: biological factors, precipitating factors, and triggering events. Some examples of biological factors include mental illness or a family member loss to suicide. Some precipitating factors include poor grades, unsafe school, victimization, or family rejection. Crisis/triggering events include a major loss, humiliation or bullying, and access to lethal means for suicide. It is important not to oversimplify the factors of suicide.

From: American Association of Suicidology (AAS) webinar January 2011.

Identifying mental illness or alcohol/other drug abuse problem is significant.

- In the 2009 YRBS, over 20% of high school students experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness. About 5% of high school students attempted suicide. This shows that depression is somewhat common, suicide is not.
- The most common mental illness leading to suicide is depression. It's also the most treatable!
- Binge drinking is highly correlated with suicide attempts. 90% of people who completed suicide had some form of mental illness and/or an alcohol/other drug abuse problem.

Reducing access to lethal means can be very worthwhile. (see www.meansmatter.com)

- Limiting access to the means for suicide provides the most significant drops in suicide rates. Most often, youth who attempt suicide use a gun kept in the home.
- Do not allow youth to have unsupervised access to firearms. Encouraging safe/secure storage of firearms is a critical prevention strategy.

When youth are facing what they believe is a crisis and exhibit warning signs of suicide, be sure they are not left alone or sent home without supervision.

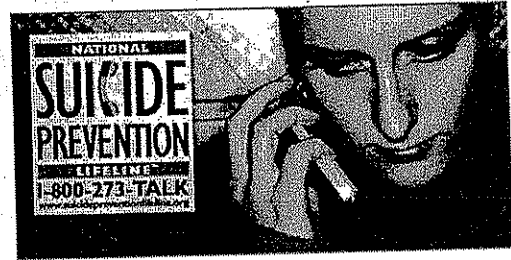
Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

Mental Health of America
www.mhawisconsin.org

Helping Others Prevent and Educate about Suicide
www.hopes-wi.org

American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

Important Resources



What can you do if you are concerned about a student?

Teachers and other school staff are well-positioned to observe student behavior and to **ACT** if there is a suspicion that a student may consider self-harm. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, but for kids, their problems can seem endless at this stage. If we get them through the crisis, there is a 90% chance that they will never attempt suicide. ACT stands for **Acknowledge, Care, and Tell**.

A

Acknowledge feelings rather than minimizing them. Telling a student to "get over it" or "move on" is not realistic for a person with depression.

- "I'm sorry to hear about this. It sounds really hard."

C

Show Care and Concern for the student by taking the next step.

- "I'm worried about you. I don't want anything bad to happen to you or for you to be hurt."

T

Tell a member of your crisis team. They know how to work with students who have concerns like these.

- "Let's go talk with someone in the counseling office."

These steps (Acknowledge-Care-Tell) are a central component of the "Signs of Suicide" program (SOS), an evidence-based school-wide intervention program. SOS kits for middle school and high school are available through your local CESA. The law states that schools must educate students on suicide prevention; see the laws handout on the DPI website for further details on curriculum.

Common Concerns

What if I make a mistake? Can I be sued?

State law insulates all public and private school district employees and volunteers from civil liability for their acts and omissions when trying to intervene in a student's possible suicide. The legislature found it so important that adults take action when a student is suicidal that they insulated those adults from civil liability for their efforts with suicidal students.

If I ask a student about suicide, will that cause them to try it?

No. This issue has been thoroughly studied. By asking a student about suicidal intent, you are offering to help them. Please do your best to reach out to students.

Seeing Urgent Warning Signs?

Here's What to Avoid

All children and adolescents can experience moodiness and will take time to ask life's big questions. Since they lack the perspective of time, they can become overwhelmed. The best roles for teachers are to support students, and if you see the suicide warning signs, use ACT. Some of the statements below might make perfect sense for students who aren't suicidal, but when kids are in crisis, these things can make it worse.

Here are some things to avoid when you see the urgent warning signs:

Don't Shame

- "You've got to get over this. It's not a big deal."
- "Why are you so worried? Move on!"
- "You're too sensitive. Grow up!"

Don't Delay

When you see urgent warning signs, get help right away, don't wait.

- "Let's talk about this next week some time."

Don't Blame

- "If you wanted a better grade, you would have worked harder."
- "You've got no one to blame but yourself."
- "Maybe you should change your attitude if you want friends."

Don't Give Up

Suicide is NOT a destiny—when people make it through the suicidal crisis, they usually go on to live healthy, productive lives!