

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Every day, about 12 youth die by suicide. For every adolescent death by suicide you hear about, about 25 suicide attempts are made. These are staggering statistics. We know that families, schools, peer groups, and communities are dramatically impacted when young people engage in suicidal behavior. We want to help you prevent these tragedies. Parents can help prevent suicide by recognizing warning signs, identifying risk factors, promoting protective factors, and knowing how to talk to their children and seek mental health services. Information is power and too much misinformation about suicide can have tragic consequences.

PARENTAL POWER

You are not powerless; you can guard your child against the possibility of suicide.

- Interact with your child positively (give consistent feedback and genuine verbal praise).
- Promote his/her involvement in positive activities (e.g., clubs, sports).
- Appropriately monitor your child's whereabouts and communications (e.g., texting, Facebook, Twitter) with the goal of promoting safety.
- Be aware of your child's social environment (e.g., friends, teammates, coaches) and communicate regularly with other parents in your community.
- Communicate regularly with your child's teachers to ensure safety at school.
- Limit your child's access to alcohol, prescription pills, illegal drugs, knives and guns.
- Talk with your child about your concerns; ask him/her directly about suicidal thoughts.
- Explain the value of therapy and medication to manage symptoms.

RESOURCES:

 *Community Hotlines/After Hours Service*

If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911

Tulare County Psychiatric Emergency Team
(559) 730-9922

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1 (800) 273-8255

Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ)
1 (866) 488-7386

 *Online Resources*

<http://www.tchhsa.org>

<http://www.sptf.org>

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

<http://www.afsp.org>

<http://www.suicidology.org>

CONTACT:

 (559) 730-2969

 bhs@tcoe.org

 1830 S. Central St.,
Visalia, CA 93277

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE



KNOW THE RISK FACTORS, RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS

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 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.

- History of depression, mental illness or substance/ alcohol abuse
- History of suicide in the family or of a close friend
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- Mental health disorders (e.g., depression or anxiety)
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt, loneliness, worthlessness, low self-esteem
- Social withdrawal (e.g., loss of interest in friends, hobbies)
- Sleep disturbance (e.g., insomnia, oversleeping, nightmares)
- Preoccupation with death
- Aggressive, erratic or self-injurious behavior
- Disruptive behavior, including disciplinary problems at school or at home
- High-risk behaviors (e.g., drinking and driving, poor decision-making)
- Access to lethal means (e.g., firearms, pills, knives, illegal drugs)
- Recent/serious loss (e.g., death, divorce, separation, broken relationship)
- Victim of bullying or acting as a bully
- Sexual orientation or gender identity confusion
- Lack of support or bullying during the coming out process for LGBTQ youth
- Stigma associated with seeking mental health services
- Barriers to accessing mental health services (e.g., lack of bilingual services providers, unreliable transportation, financial costs)



KNOW THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

These factors help people deal with stress and reduce their chances of engaging in suicidal behaviors:

- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and handling problems in a nonviolent way
- Strong connections to family, friends and community support
- Restriction from lethal means of suicide
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation
- Easy access to services
- Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE: THE FACTS

Information is power and misinformation about suicide can have tragic consequences. Focusing on the facts can empower you to help your child in distress.

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 or physical pain. Most have a mental illness. Interventions can save lives.

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.

FACT: It is not always easy to tell when your child is showing signs of suicidal behavior. This underlines the importance for parents/guardians to be attentive to warning signs, risk factors, to ask direct questions, and be open to conversation.

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.

HERE’S WHAT YOU CAN DO:



TALK TO YOUR CHILD

Talking to your child about a topic like suicide can feel incredibly frightening, but it is necessary. Have this important discussion with your child using these tips:

- Talk in a calm, non-accusatory manner
- Express loving concern
- Convey how important they are to you
- Focus on your concern for your child’s well-being and health
- Make “I” statements to convey you understand the stressors they may be experiencing
- Encourage professional help-seeking behaviors (locate appropriate resources)
- Reassure your adolescent that engaging in services can change his/her outlook for the future



TAKE ACTION

Mental health professionals can be essential partners in child suicide prevention. Take appropriate action to protect your child. Participate in the mental health treatment of your child.

- If you feel that something is “just not right”
- If you notice warning signs
- If you recognize your child has many of the risk factors and few of the protective factors listed above



STEPS TO TAKE WHEN INTERACTING WITH YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL

- Meet with school counselor to share concerns
- Request that school counselor meet with child and review options if they need help
- Have your child identify at least one supportive adult at the school they feel comfortable with (ensure that person is aware)
- Establish and share a safety plan with all necessary and supportive people