

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

SUICIDE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG SCHOOL AGE YOUTH AND IT IS PREVENTABLE. AS A PARENT/CAREGIVER, YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD BY RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS, RISK FACTORS AND RESPONDING QUICKLY AND APPROPRIATELY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION IN THE SAME WAY YOU DO OTHER SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUES.

WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs are observable behaviors that may indicate that suicidal thoughts or behaviors are present. Below you will find examples of warning signs that can help you determine if someone is at risk for suicide. These warning signs can be seen as "cries for help" and an indirect way of asking you to intervene.

- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or helplessness
- Talking about being a burden to others, feeling trapped, or having no reason to live
- Sudden changes in appearance and behaviors
- Social withdrawal and Isolation
- Increase use of drugs or alcohol
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves
- History of suicidal or self injurious thoughts/behaviors
- Preoccupation with death

RISK FACTORS

There is no one clear path that predicts suicide behavior, but there are risk factors that are associated with an increase in the potential for suicide behaviors to occur.

- History of mental illness both in self or family
- History of alcohol or substance use
- Hopelessness
- History of trauma or abuse
- Stressors (loss of relationships, job or financial loss, school, gender identity issues)
- Access to means (ie. firearms, knives, weapons, medication)
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- Major medical problems or physical illness
- Lack of support/isolation
- Lack of mental health treatment

HOW TO HELP

LISTEN: Assess for suicide risk, listen without judgement, ask questions.

RESPOND: Take action immediately, do not leave your child unattended, create a safety plan, be supportive.

SUPPORT: Connect to additional support from your child's school and community mental health services. Help your child identify adults they trust in the home and at school.

CONNECT: Provide a stable and safe emotional and physical environment, spend quality time with your child, check in with your child on a daily basis.

Remember:

- Stay calm.
- Establish a safe environment for your child to talk with you.
- Be aware of your own thoughts, emotions and judgement.
- Listen without judgement.
- Learn the warning signs and risk factors.
- Teach your child how to ask for help.
- Teach and model healthy ways to cope with stress.
- Seek additional help through your child's school and community.

Myths and Facts

Myth: If someone is determined to die by suicide, there is no stopping them.

Fact: 90% of people who die by suicide have a treatable mental illness. Suicide is preventable and the vast majority of people who are thinking about suicide, don't really want to die. Most have a mental illness and intervention can save lives.

Myth: Talking about suicide will increase the chance or give someone the idea to die by suicide.

Fact: Suicidal thoughts do not occur because you give the idea to someone. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide can actually help. This will give the person the opportunity to talk about their troubles and talking can help ease their pain and allow for them to work on finding solutions.

Myth: Young people who talk about suicide don't really mean it and are just looking for attention.

Fact: If someone, including young children and teens, are talking about suicide, it can be a cry for help and intervention is needed immediately. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for those age 10-34 years old.

Myth: Suicide attempts or deaths happen without warning.

Fact: Warning signs are present in most cases of people who die by suicide. Being aware of the warning signs, changes in behavior, and listening to what someone is telling you needs to be taken seriously.

Myth: If a person survives a suicide attempt, they won't try again.

Fact: History of suicide attempts is a warning sign and a risk factor. It is likely that, without intervention, the person will attempt again and the level of danger will also increase.

Myth: A parent/caregiver can easily tell if their child is showing signs of suicidal behavior.

Fact: Research has shown that this is not the case and parents/caregivers often miss or dismiss warning signs and risk factors. This further illustrates the importance of being attentive to warning signs and to ask questions, opening conversation, and seeking help.

Resources and Support Services



If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911

For psychiatric services, crisis assessments, and counseling services

contact Denton County MHMR Center: (800)762-0157

Mental Health Questions and Emergencies: (800)269-6233

Denton County Information and Referral Numbers: 211

Suicide Prevention Hotline: (877)727-4747

Suicide Prevention Hotline Spanish: (800)784-2432

Teen Line - (800)852-8336, Text TEEN to 839863