



## Facts and Figures

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds and 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for 10-14 year olds (CDC, 2015)
- 1 in 5 adolescents have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Approximately 1/3 of mood disorders, such as depression, first emerge during adolescence (Kessler, et al. 2005)
- Less than half of the adolescents with a psychiatric disorder received any kind of treatment in the past year (Costello et al., 2013)
- The prevalence of depression in adolescents and young adults increased from 8.7% in 2006 to 11.3% in 2014 (Mojtabai et.al 2016)
- 9.9% of Missouri High School students report having made a plan to attempt suicide (MSS, 2016)
- CHADS facilitates the Signs of Suicide® program in 150+ schools to over 20,000 students in the St. Louis area. 13.2% of those students ask for help for themselves or a friend (CHADS Coalition, 2018)

## Risk Factors

A **risk factor** is a personal trait or environmental quality that is associated with increased risk of suicide.

**Risk factors ≠ causes**

### Examples:

**Behavioral Health:** depressive disorders, substance abuse, self-injury

**Personal Characteristics:** hopelessness, ↓ self-esteem, social isolation, poor problem-solving

**Adverse Life Circumstances:** interpersonal difficulties, bullying, hx abuse, exposure to peer suicide

**Family Characteristics:** family hx suicide, parental divorce, family hx mental health disorders

**Environmental:** exposure to stigma, access to lethal means, limited access to mental health care

### Populations at elevated Risk

- LGBTQ+
- Alcohol or drug use
- Non-suicidal self-injury or previous suicide attempt
- Homeless or out-of-home settings
- Medical conditions or disability
- Impacted by suicide
- Bullying (victim and perpetrator)
- Giftedness

### Warning Signs of Depression

- Anger irritability or rage
- Loss of interest in formerly fun activities
- Change in appetite/weight
- Physical pain (headaches, stomachaches)
- Feelings of sadness
- Excessive isolation
- Loss of energy
- Substance abuse



## Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking or writing about suicide
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, like a burden
- Strong feelings of wanting to be dead
- Behavior problems or risk-taking behavior
- Staring/increasing drug or alcohol use
- Giving away favorite things
- Sudden sense of calm or happiness
- Previous suicide attempt
- History of depression

## Precipitating/Trigger Event

- A precipitating event is a recent life event that serves as a trigger, moving an individual from thinking about suicide to attempting to take his or her own life.
- No single event causes suicidality; other risk factors are typically present
- Examples:
  - breakup
  - bullying incident
  - sudden death of a loved one
  - trouble at school

## If You See Warning Signs:

**A**cknowledge that you are seeing signs of depression or suicide in a student

**C**are: Let the student know you **care** about them and you can help

**T**ell: Follow your school protocol and **tell** your mental health contact

- Ask if they have a plan
  - WHEN, WHERE, HOW, ACCESS
  - The more detailed the plan, the greater the risk
- Do not leave them alone
  - Supervise the student constantly (or make sure the student is in a secure environment supervised by caring adults) until he or she can be seen by the mental health contact.
- Ensure a safe environment
  - Remove all weapons from the home
  - Hide prescriptions and over the counter drugs
- Escort the student to see the mental health contact or administrator.
  - Provide any additional information to the mental health professional evaluating the student to help in the assessment process. That person will notify the student's parents.



## Do's and Don'ts

- Ask if they are having thoughts of suicide
  - Do: Are you having thoughts of suicide?
  - Don't: You're not going to do anything stupid, are you?
- Validate them
  - Do: I am so glad you told me; thank you for sharing that, that seems very overwhelming
  - Don't: You shouldn't feel that way; you have everything going for you
- Stay calm, control your emotions
  - Do: Ok, let's see who else we can call for help.
  - Don't: This is really difficult for me
- Keeping a secret
  - Do: I can't promise to keep this a secret, but I can promise to get you help
  - Don't: I won't tell anyone

## Managing Your Reaction

### Avoid:

- Arguing with the student about their feelings or choices.
- Minimizing the student's feelings.
- Keeping what you learn a secret.

### Remember:

- You don't need to be the expert or have all the answers.
- Give yourself permission to be human. It's normal to feel anxiety or other difficult feelings.
- Talk to a supportive person beforehand and debrief afterward.

## Building Protective Factors

**Protective factors** are personal traits or environmental qualities that can reduce the risk of suicidal behavior.

**Protective factors ≠ immunity, but help reduce risk**

### Examples:

- **Individual Characteristics** (adaptable temperament, coping skills, self-esteem, spiritual faith)
- **Family/Other Support** (connectedness, social support)
- **Mental Health and Healthcare** (access to care, support through medical/mental health relationships)
- **Restricted Access to Means** (firearms/medications/alcohol, safety barriers for bridges)
- **School** (positive experience, connectedness, sense of respect)



## Resources

- **CHADS Coalition:**
  - Office Counseling for Kids/Adolescents
  - Adult Survivors of Suicide Support Group
  - 314-952-8274
  - [www.chadscoalition.org](http://www.chadscoalition.org)
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**
  - Linda Fehrman: 314-853-7925
  - Survivor Outreach Program
  - [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- **Annie's Hope:**
  - Grief resources for Kids/Adolescents
  - 314-965-5015
- **Carla Smith Foundation:**
  - Jim and Linda Murphy: 314-481-0008
  - Adult Support Group for families who have children
  - living with Mental Health Concerns
- **United Way Family Support Line**
  - <https://www.unitedway.org/our-impact/focus/health/>
  - Phone: 211
- **National Alliance for Mental Illness:**  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- **American Association for Suicidology:** [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)
- **SAMSHA Behavioral Health Locator:**  
<https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

## Crisis Hotlines

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

### **Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741741

### **St. Louis County Youth Connection Helpline**

1-314-628-2929

1-877-928-2929

Text 4HLP to 31658

### **Behavioral Health Response**

1-314-469-6644

1-800-811-4760

### **Life Crisis Hotline**

1-314-647-4357

### **Self-Injury Hotline**

1-800-366-8288

### **Safe Connections 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-314-531-2003

### **National Hopeline Network**

1-800-784-2433

[www.hopeline.com](http://www.hopeline.com)

### **KUTO-Kids Under 21**

1-888-644-5886

[www.kuto.org](http://www.kuto.org)

### **Youth in Need Hotline**

1-636-946-3771

### **Gay and Lesbian Hotlines**

1-888-843-4564

1-800-246-7743 (PRIDE)

[www.glnh.org](http://www.glnh.org)

### **Trevor Crisis Hotline**

1-866-488-7386

### **RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline**

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

### **SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) Hotline**

1-775-221-7600

### **ALIVE - 24 Hour Domestic Violence Crisis Line (St. Louis)**

1-314-993-2777

### **Missouri Child Abuse Hotline**

1-800-392-3738

### **MO School Violence Hotline**

1-866-748-7047