

## Teen Suicide

- Suicides among young people continue to be a serious problem.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds.
- Teenagers experience strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while growing up.
- Depression and suicidal feelings are treatable mental disorders. The child or adolescent needs to have his or her illness recognized and diagnosed, and appropriate treatment plans developed.
- Many of the signs and symptoms of suicidal feelings are similar to those of depression.

### WARNING SIGNS

**Parents and adults should be aware of the following signs of adolescents who may be at risk of suicide:**

- change in eating and sleeping habits
- withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- drug and alcohol use
- unusual neglect of personal appearance
- marked personality change
- persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- not tolerating praise or rewards

**A teenager who is planning to commit suicide may also:**

- complain of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside
- give verbal hints with statements such as: I won't be a problem for you much longer, nothing matters, It's no use, and I won't see you again
- put his or her affairs in order, for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.
- become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression
- have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)

If a child or adolescent says, I want to kill myself, or I'm going to commit suicide, always take the statement seriously and immediately seek assistance from a qualified mental health professional.

If one or more of these signs occurs, parents need to talk to their child about their concerns and seek professional help from a physician or a qualified mental health professional.

## **Talking with Youth about Suicide**

*A guide for parents, school staff and community members*

People often feel uncomfortable talking about death. However, asking the child or adolescent whether he or she is depressed or thinking about suicide can be helpful.

Talking to children and adolescents about suicide and feelings surrounding suicide will provide assurance that somebody cares and will give the young person the chance to talk about problems.

**Offer support** Let depressed teenagers know that you're there for them, fully and unconditionally. Hold back from asking a lot of questions (teenagers don't like to feel patronized or crowded), but make it clear that you're ready and willing to provide whatever support they need.

**Be gentle but persistent** Don't give up if your adolescent shuts you out at first. Talking about depression can be very tough for teens. Be respectful of your child's comfort level while still emphasizing your concern and willingness to listen.

**Listen without lecturing** Resist any urge to criticize or pass judgment once your teenager begins to talk. The important thing is that your child is communicating. Avoid offering unsolicited advice or ultimatums as well.

**Validate feelings** Don't try to talk your teen out of his or her depression, even if his or her feelings or concerns appear silly or irrational to you. Simply acknowledge the pain and sadness he or she is feeling. If you don't, he or she will feel like you don't take his or her emotions seriously.

With support from family, school and community and with appropriate treatment, children and teenagers who are suicidal can heal and return to a healthier path of development.

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES:**

If you are concerned about any student, the following are resources within the community:

- Student Assistance Program Counselors, available at each school building
- Safe School Hotline: 800-418-6423
- Cornerstone for Hope 614-824-4285
- Concord Counseling: 614-882-9338
- UMCH/Wesley Family Services: 614-855-5020
- Nationwide Children's Hospital: 614-335-8300
- Franklin County Hotline for Suicide Prevention: 614-221-5445

Each building has access to various community resources aimed to fit the needs of our students and families. Please connect with the counselors/social workers in your building as needed.