

# Youth Suicide Awareness



## The purpose of this resource

is to provide families with information about:

- the resources
- the support systems
- advancements being made

on the national, state, & local levels to provide **youth suicide awareness & prevention.**

## This guide provides

families with a list of:

- warning signs
- potential causes
- available supports

**to help prevent teen suicide.**

## Together...

- families
- schools
- communities

share a responsibility to provide teens with the support they need

**to lead meaningful and successful lives.**

To support Kansas teens, the legislature has signed into law the following suicide awareness act:

### **The Jason Flatt Youth Suicide Awareness Act**

In 2016, the Kansas Legislature passed and the Governor has signed "SB 323", the Jason Flatt Youth Suicide Awareness Act. The provisions of the bill relevant to suicide awareness and prevention are provided below:

- The Board of Education of each school district shall provide suicide awareness and prevention programming to all school staff and shall notify the parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in such school district that the training materials provided under such programming are available to such parents or legal guardians.
- Such programming shall include at a minimum:
  - At least one hour of training each calendar year based on programs approved by the State Board of Education. Such training may be satisfied through independent self-review of suicide prevention training materials
  - A building crisis plan developed for each school building. Such plan shall include:
    - Steps for recognizing suicide ideation
    - Appropriate methods of interventions
    - A crisis recovery plan
- On or before January 1, 2017, the State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

**The Kansas State Department of Education** has provided suicide awareness and prevention resources to all school districts. In addition, **National Suicide Prevention Month** has been designated in September of each year. During this month, school districts will conduct various events to promote teen suicide prevention. It is important for families to learn more about these events and opportunities and offer assistance to build awareness of teen suicide prevention.

The suicide awareness and preventions resources available to schools may be found at:

<http://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Career-Standards-and-Assessment-Services/Content-Area-M-Z/School-Counseling/School-Counseling-Resources>

### **Kansas – Youth Suicide Statistical Impact**

While not intending to alarm families, it is important to be aware of the prevalence of the thoughts of hopelessness and sadness some Kansas teens experience. It is important to help teens know they have support systems to help them through what can be very trying and challenging years. The following information is from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Web Based Inquiry Statistics Query and Reporting System as it relates to Kansas.

#### **According to the latest CDC's WISQARS National Data Reporting (2014):**

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-14 in Kansas.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 12-18 (middle and high school ages) in Kansas.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for college-age youth ages 18-22 in Kansas.
- When examined as an age group 10-24 comparison, suicide is the 2nd leading overall cause of death for Kansas. **In Kansas, every 5.98 days on an average a young person (ages 10-24) is lost to this "Silent Epidemic" of youth suicide.**

### **Kansas 2013 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (CDC):**

(Most Recent Released Report)

#### **When young people were asked in Kansas:**

- **"Have you experienced the feeling of hopelessness and sadness for a constant period of two weeks or greater during the past twelve months (possible beginning of clinical depression)?"**
  - 24% answered YES or Almost 1 out of every 4 young people.
  - Compared to Nationally – 29.9% (depression is a leading cause of suicide)
  - This equates to 49,968 youth in the state that will have these feelings in the next 12 months **if nothing is done differently.**
- **"Have you seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months?"**
  - 16.4% answered YES or Almost 1 out of every 6 young people.
  - Compared to Nationally – 17.0%
  - This equates to 34,145 youth in the state that will consider suicide in the next 12 months **if nothing is done differently.**
- **"Have you made a plan to commit suicide in the past 12 months?"**
  - 12.5% answered YES or 1 out of every 8 young people.
  - Compared to Nationally – 13.6%
  - This equates to 26,025 youth in the state that will make a plan **if nothing is done differently.**
- **"Have you attempted suicide in the past 12 months?"**
  - 8.4% answered YES or Over 1 out of every 12 young people.
  - Compared to Nationally – 8.0%
  - This equates to 17,489 youth in the state that will make an attempt in the next 12 months **if nothing is done differently.**
  - **This is an average of 48 per day.**



1-800-273-TALK (8255)

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

## Why might teens consider suicide?

TeenSuicide.us (<http://www.teensuicide.us/articles3.html>) provides understanding into one of the most important aspects of teen suicide prevention which is support. Teenagers need to know that they have the love and support to help them find hope in life again. One of the most effective ways to prevent teen suicide is to recognize the signs of suicidal thoughts and feelings, and seek professional help. Some of the most effective teen suicide prevention programs consist of identifying and treating the following problems:

- Mental and learning disorders
- Substance abuse problems
- Problems dealing with stress
- Behavior problems (such as controlling aggressive and impulsive behavior)

All of the above issues can be difficult teenagers to cope with, leading to helplessness and discouragement, which in turn can turn to self-destructive thoughts in order to make an escape from the seemingly insurmountable pressures of life. Getting help for underlying problems, which almost always include teen depression can lead to more effective teen suicide prevention. The support a teenager receives as they enter therapy can help them more effectively recover and know that there are people who want to help them deal with the issues of life.

## What are possible warning signs?

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide (<http://www.sptsusa.org/parents/>) provides a set of signs using the acronym **F.A.C.T.S.** While this is an extensive list, it is certainly not applicable for every situation or circumstance a family might experience:

**FEELINGS** that, again, seem different from the past, like hopelessness; fear of losing control; helplessness; worthlessness; feeling anxious, worried or angry often.

**ACTIONS** that are different from the way your child acted in the past, especially things like talking about death or suicide, taking dangerous risks, withdrawing from activities or sports or using alcohol or drugs.

**CHANGES** in personality, behavior, sleeping patterns, eating habits; loss of interest in friends or activities or sudden improvement after a period of being down or withdrawn.

**THREATS** that convey a sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, or preoccupation with death ("Life doesn't seem worth it sometimes"; "I wish I were dead"; "Heaven's got to be better than this"); plans like giving away favorite things, studying ways to die, obtaining a weapon or supply of pills; suicide attempts through overdosing or cutting.

**SITUATIONS** that can serve as "trigger points" for suicidal behaviors. These include things such as loss or death; humiliations, rejections, or failures, getting in trouble at home, in school or with the law; a break-up; or impending changes for which your child feels scared or unprepared.

## What can families do to help prevent teen suicide?

Parenting is one of the most challenging, yet rewarding roles in life. While the following provides a few examples of ways to prevent teen suicide there is never an easy answer to understand how an individual's mind thinks. From the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH Office of Suicide Prevention (<http://suicideprevention.nv.gov/Youth/WhatYouCanDo/>)) provided below are steps families make take to assist their teen.

### *Spend quality time with your teenager.*

"Quality time" is a cliché frequently used in child rearing literature and it is met with a certain degree of cynicism. However, a good relationship between a youth and their parents cannot occur unless they spend time together.

### *LISTEN to your teenager, not only to what is being said, but also to the covert messages.*

Teenagers commonly complain that their parents are always willing to give advice but they don't listen to their points of view. Messages sent by teenagers may at times be indirect, contradicting and confusing. Parents will need to "de-code" these scrambled messages to get in touch with their teenager's feelings. In many instances this may mean an interpretation of their body language. Non-verbal action can "talk" much louder than conversational language.

### *Be supportive and not intrusive.*

There is a fine line between being supportive and being intrusive. It is important for parents to acknowledge the upset and distress shown by their teenage children, but not interrogating and demanding to know the "secrets" of their distress. Teenagers will generally talk to their parents about their problems when they are ready. Respect the fact that they can solve many problems on their own without the support of others. Support is there for them to use but it must not be imposed on them.

### *Encourage the appropriate expression of emotions*

Many teenagers tend to either hide their emotions or they show them in an explosive manner, thus leading to their parents' comments about their moodiness. Encourage them to show and share their feelings of joy, happiness and excitement in their successes. They can then show and share their sadness, anxiety, distress and disappointment.

## Additional Resources

Families that have concerns that their teenager may be at risk of suicide can seek out support through their family members, community, school counselor, medical and health care personnel, and/or psychological and clinical care facilities. Provided below are agencies and resources for additional information about teen suicide prevention.

**National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html>

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
<http://www.sprc.org>

**American Association of Suicidology**  
<http://www.suicidology.org>

**National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide**  
<http://www.suicidology.org/ncpy>

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**  
<http://www.afsp.org>