

SUICIDE PREVENTION: FACTS FOR PARENTS

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCE UNIQUE CHALLENGES

High school can be a rewarding time for young people. But for some students, it can also be emotionally difficult, especially in 9th grade during the transition to high school and again in 12th grade during the transition out of high school.

The stresses of high school and the mental and emotional stage of adolescence can combine with risk factors for suicide, such as depression, and increase the risk of suicide for some teens. Parents and school staff can help identify students at risk of suicide and help them get treatment before a tragedy occurs.

Many high school students reported that they had seriously considered suicide in the past year.

- One out of every 53 high school students (1.9 percent) reported having made a suicide attempt that was serious enough to be treated by a doctor or a nurse.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers.

WHY HIGH SCHOOLS ADDRESS SUICIDE

- Administrators and staff care about the well-being of their students.
- Maintaining a safe and secure school environment is part of a school's overall mission.
- Depression and other mental health issues can interfere with children's ability to learn and affect their academic performance.

Although few suicides take place on high school campuses, students spend much of the day in school. This puts high schools in a position to identify and help students who may be at risk for suicide and related behavioral health issues.

PREVENTING SUICIDE CAN PREVENT OTHER BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Students at risk of suicide may also be at risk of other problem behaviors, such as violence and bullying, and substance abuse. Reducing the risk of suicide can help reduce the likelihood of these other behaviors.

Parents can help protect their children from suicide risk by:

- Maintaining a supportive and involved relationship with their sons and daughters
- Understanding the warning signs and risk factors for suicide
- Knowing where to turn for help

HOW SCHOOLS CAN HELP PREVENT SUICIDE

Experts recommend that schools use an approach to suicide prevention that includes the following:

- Identifying students at possible risk of suicide and referring them to appropriate services
- Responding appropriately to a suicide death
- Providing training and suicide awareness education for staff
- Educating parents regarding suicide risk and mental health promotion
- Educating and involving students in mental health promotion and suicide prevention efforts
- Screening students for suicide risk

You should encourage your high school to implement some or all of these strategies to prevent suicide and protect the well-being of your children. You can work with the school on these important efforts as well as use the school as a resource for help with your child's needs.

The contents of this handout are taken from *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*, available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA12-4669>.