



DeSoto County Schools

When Your Child Expresses Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviors: A Guide for Parents

If you think your child may be contemplating suicide, you can best help him/her by paying attention, listening, and acknowledging what he/she is saying or doing. Remain calm and get your child the help he/she needs. It is not uncommon for someone in his/her emotional state to resist seeking help. He/she is in crisis and may be incapable of making a rational decision. Whatever may be occurring for your child, he/she will look to you for support. Assure him/her that help is available.

This is a life and death situation. Accepting any reason for not getting help is too dangerous.

According to The Jason Foundation, 4 out of 5 teens who attempt suicide give clear warning signs. Here are some **Warning Signs** that a suicidal person may be experiencing:

- Talking about suicide
- Making statements about feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless
- A deepening depression
- Preoccupation with death
- Taking unnecessary risks or self-destructive behaviors
- Out of character behaviors
- A loss of interest in the things he/she cares about
- Giving prized possessions away

Here are some **Risk Factors** that may elevate the possibility of suicidal ideation:

- Perfectionist personalities
- Gay and Lesbian youth
- Loners
- Learning disabled youth

- Students in serious trouble
- Abused, molested or neglected youth
- Parental history of violence, substance abuse or divorce

Seeking Assistance:

In seeking assistance, your child's safety is the first consideration. The child should never be left alone during this crisis. If your child has a physician or therapist, call to alert them of the situation. Alternatively, the **National Suicide Prevention hotline** can be called at 888-359-8255, the **Memphis Crisis Center** at 901-274-7477, or in severe cases, call **911**.

Information obtained from Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention-Compiled by: Shashank V. Joshi, MD, Mary Ojakian, RN, Linda Lenoir, RN, MSN, CNS, and Jasmine Lopez, MA, NCC