

Take Action

If you encounter a student at immediate risk, Don't be afraid to ask if they are suicidal and be persistent if necessary. Trust your gut feelings.

1. Supervise the student constantly (or make sure he/she is in a secure environment supervised by a caring adult) until he or she can be seen by a mental health contact.
2. Escort the student to see the counselor or other mental health contact. Never leave the student alone.
3. Provide any additional information to the mental health contact that could help with the assessment process. That person should notify the parents.

Be Prepared to Respond to a Suicide Death

Appropriate response is critical. This response is called postvention and is handled by school administration and mental health staff. For best practice postvention guidelines, visit the Schools page at: spanidaho.org, click on Postvention.

Means Matter

If deadly methods are not readily available a suicidal person may delay or not make an attempt. Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and their method can save a life. Parents of students at risk should temporarily remove firearms from the home and lock up medications and toxins.

Much of the information here is courtesy of SPAN Idaho and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Visit their websites for more information on suicide prevention for schools at www.spanidaho.org and www.sprc.org

If you, or someone you know, is in crisis or emotional distress, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 1-208-398-HELP (4357).



Youth Suicide: Helping Your Student



Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
Division of Public Health

Suicide Prevention Program
Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
Division of Public Health
450 West State Street, 4th Floor
PO Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0036
Phone: 208-334-4953

October 2017

Suicide is preventable...

And school personnel can make a difference. School personnel spend more time with our youth than any other professionals, and often, more time than parents. School staff members are in the position to be suicide prevention gatekeepers and can save lives. Schools must demonstrate “good faith” efforts to prevent suicide. In Idaho, with the exception of school counselors and psychologists, duty to warn for school personnel is limited to situations when there is a known suicidal tendency. School counselors and psychologists are not limited in this way and always have a duty to warn in all cases.

Why Suicide Prevention is Important?

- In the last five years, Idaho has lost **105** school-aged children to suicide; **27** of those were age **14 or younger**.
- **1 in 5** Idaho high school students has seriously considered suicide; **1** in every **6** has a suicide plan and **1 in 10** has made a suicide attempt.

Promote Belongingness

Teachers and other school personnel already play an active role in prevention by fostering the emotional sense of well-being among all students, not just those already at risk. Teachers also promote feelings of connectedness, belonging and capability which research shows are essential to preventing suicide and other risky behaviors.

Learn the Warning Signs

Knowing the warning signals for suicide can save a life. Warning signs include:

- Talking about, planning or threatening suicide
- Withdrawal or isolation from friends, family or activities
- Previous suicide attempts
- Agitation, especially when combined with sleeplessness
- Giving away prized possessions, making final arrangements, putting affairs in order
- Themes of death or depression in conversation, writing, reading or art
- Recent loss of a friend or family member through death, suicide or divorce
- Feeling hopeless or trapped
- Sudden dramatic decline or improvement in schoolwork
- Any change in behavior, sleep, eating, etc.
- Use or increased use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Chronic headaches, stomachaches & fatigue

Remember

Any one of these signs alone doesn't necessarily indicate a person is suicidal. However, all signs are reason for concern and several signals may be cause for concern of suicide. Warning signs are especially important if the person has attempted suicide in the past.

Take Immediate Action if Someone is:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Seeking a way to kill oneself, e.g., obtaining a gun or medications
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

Be Aware of Risk Factors

Pressures such as unrealistic academic, social or family expectations can create a strong sense of rejection and can lead to deep disappointment. Teens and young adults are especially prone to feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and rejection as a result of these pressures.

Depressed youth should receive prompt, professional treatment. Keep in mind that depression in *young men often appears as anger, rage, aggression and getting into fights*.

Abuse of Alcohol, Drugs or Sex is a way that some young people cope with feelings of depression or loneliness.

Isolation or Withdrawal can also be a coping strategy for the suicidal youth making them even more susceptible to loneliness, depression and substance abuse.

Other General Risk Factors Include:

- Mental disorders or substance use disorders
- Hopelessness
- History of trauma or abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Easy access to lethal means
- Lack of social support
- Local clusters of suicide that have a contagious influence