

Helping Macomb County Youth

Given the amount of time adolescents spend in school, it is imperative that school faculty and staff are educated about youth suicide risk factors, warning signs and protective factors.

The statistics are shocking: In 2014, suicide was the second leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds in the U.S. (990 deaths). In Michigan, there were 191 deaths, 19% of the U.S. total.



During the 2014 – 2015 school year in Macomb County, there were seven (middle to high school) students that died by suicide.

It is more important than ever that teachers help prevent youth suicide. By knowing how to identify early warning signs, risk factors and protective factors, you, as a teacher, could literally save the life of a child.

Michigan FAST FACTS:

for youth 15 to 24 years old
(2014 most recent data available)

- Suicide was the leading cause of death for males
- Suicide was the third leading cause of death for females
- Overall, it was the second leading cause of death for youth 10 -18

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

www.imalive.org

An Online Crisis Network

Crisis Text Line (24/7)

Text "Start" to 741-741



www.knowresolve.org



**What every
Macomb County
TEACHER
should know about
PREVENTING
youth SUICIDE**



Suicide Free Schools is a county-wide quality of life initiative formed to enhance personal and social health through the community. Collaborating partners include: MISD, KnowResolve, CARE, Macomb County Suicide Prevention Coalition, Utica Community Schools, Fitzgerald Public Schools and Chippewa Valley Schools.

Teachers, Take a Closer Look:

While adolescent suicide is not taken lightly, the motivation, risk factors and warning signs are often missed and misunderstood. Teachers can sometimes mistake a youth's change in mood as a case of "being a typical moody teenager" when, in fact, it may be more serious. It could be that the youth is suffering from depression. It could be the youth is thinking of suicide.

Risk Factors:

Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that someone will consider, attempt or die by suicide. They can be considered "clues." Partial list includes:

- Previous attempts
- Abuse (*physical, sexual, emotional*)
- Feelings of hopelessness or isolation
- Mental health disorders (*especially mood disorders*)
- Parental mental health disorder
- Substance abuse disorder (*especially when combined with mental health disorder*)
- Conduct disorder or disruptive behaviors
- Juvenile delinquency
- School problems
- Exposure to suicidal behaviors of family, friends or acquaintances, or in the media
- Chronic physical illness
- Being homeless or having run away from home
- Aggressive-impulsive behaviors
- Life stressors, such as interpersonal losses (*relationship, social, work*) and legal or disciplinary problems
- Access to firearms or other means

Warning Signs:

Warning signs are behaviors and characteristics that someone may harm himself or herself in the near future; these may be considered "red flags."

- Communicating thoughts of suicide verbally, in writing or artistically
- Making suicide plans
- Making hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness or being "beyond help" statements
- Becoming suddenly cheerful after a period of depression (*this may mean that the student has already made the decision to escape all problems by ending his/her life*)
- Visiting past teachers/saying goodbye
- Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
- Changes in grades and attendance
- Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
- Recent increased agitation or irritability (*e.g., exhibiting impulsivity, such as violent behaviors, rebellious behaviors or running away or anger hostility that seems out of character or out of context*)

Among young adults ages 15 to 24 years old, there are approximately 100-200 attempts for every completed suicide.

School Protective Factors:

Research indicates that suicidal thoughts and behavior in youth may be buffered or equalized with the presence of protective factors. There are many protective factors across multiple domains (Individual, Peer, Family, Community and School).

Schools help youth mitigate the effects of risk factors by being responsive to students' needs and promoting:

- Positive attitudes toward school
- School bonding
- Regular school attendance
- High expectations for behavior and academics
- Goal-setting, academic achievement and positive social development
- Positive instructional climate
- Leadership and decision-making opportunities for students
- Active involvement of students, parents and community members

The Next Step... School Counselor

If you've noticed warning signs of depression or suicide, DO NOT ignore them and hope your student will "get over it." Instead, step in and help prevent suicide by:

- Taking suicidal and homicidal talk seriously
- Making yourself available
- Connecting with your student
- Setting limits when needed
- Sharing information with appropriate school officials

After you have identified a student as being at risk for depression or suicide, the next step is to refer the student to his/her school counselor.

Where There's Help, There's Hope!

As a teacher, you play a crucial role in the early recognition and referral of students who may be depressed or suicidal. Knowing what to look for and what to do could mean the difference between life and death for a student close to you.