

Youth Suicide Prevention

Helping Your Students



IDAHO
LIVES
PROJECT

School Personnel 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 clinicians, duty to warn for school personnel is limited to situations when there is a known suicidal tendency. School clinicians are not limited in this way and always have a duty to warn in all cases.

Learn the Warning Signs

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

- Talking about, planning or threatening suicide
- Previous suicide attempts
- Agitation, especially combined with sleeplessness
- Withdrawal or isolation from friends, family or activities
- Nightmares

Trust Your Gut

Knowing the warning signs for suicide can save a life. Be aware of the risk factors for youth suicide as well. Most suicidal people give some clues and warning signs listed here. By learning the warning signs, paying attention and trusting your own judgement, you can make the difference between life and death.

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 a person has attempted suicide in the past.

Take Action

If you encounter a student you believe is 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 they are in a secure environment supervised by a caring adult) until they can be seen by a mental health professional.
- 2** Escort the student to see the counselor or other mental health professional. Never leave the student alone.
- 3** Provide any additional information to the mental health professional that could help with the assessment process. They should notify the parents.

Take Immediate Action if Someone is

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Seeking a way to kill oneself such as obtaining a gun or medications
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

Why Suicide Prevention is Important

122

School-aged Idaho
Children lost to
suicide in the last
five years



30

Of those were
age 14
or younger



1 in 5 has made a suicide plan



1 in 6 Idaho high school students has seriously considered suicide



1 in 10 has made a suicide attempt

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
and 2019 Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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.

Depression in young people can be difficult to detect. It is extremely important that depressed youth 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 are way some young people cope with feelings of depression or loneliness. However, such behaviors only lead to new problems and a deeper level of depression.

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

Other General Risk Factors

- Mental health/substance use disorders
- Hopelessness
- History of trauma or abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Easy access to lethal means
- Lack of social support

Promote Belongingness

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

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 idaholives.org.

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.



Youth Suicide Prevention Program

Idaho State Department of Education

Idaho Lives Project

(208) 332-6816

idaholives.org



If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or suicide crisis, contact the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline: Call (800) 273-8255 or Text (208) 398-4357

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

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