Colorado PTA®
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Health, Wellness & Safety
Suicide Prevention

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Warning signs of suicide are not always obvious, and they may vary from person to person. Some make their intention clear, while others keep thoughts and feelings secret. Below are listed a partial list of warning signs of suicide:

- A severe drop in school or work performance
- An overwhelming sense of shame or guilt
- Being hopeless, helpless, worthless
- Being severely anxious and/or agitated
- Change in personality and/or appearance becoming less concerned about personal appearance
- Changing normal routines such as eating and sleeping
- Deep sadness
- Developing personality changes
- Doing risky or self-destructive things, such as using drugs/alcohol or driving recklessly
- Emotionally high one day and deeply depresses the next
- Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation
- Getting the means to take their own life such as buying a gun, knowing where family gun is located, gathering drugs (often prescription drugs from family)
- Giving away personal belongings or getting affairs in order with no logical explanation
- Having mood swings
- Having trouble concentrating or thinking clearly
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Losing interest in things once cared about
- Making comments such as, “it would be better if I wasn’t here” or “the family would be better off without me”
- Preoccupied with death, dying or violence
- Saying goodbye to family and friends without explanation
- Searching online for methods of committing suicide
- Showing signs of rage or talking about revenge
- Sudden calmness – suddenly becoming calm after a period of depression or moodiness can be a sign that the person has made a decision
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Talking about suicide and/or making suicide statements
- Wanting to be left alone
- Withdrawal from social contact (family, friends)
- Write songs, poems, or letters about death, separation, and loss

OTHER RISK FACTORS

- Chronic physical illness/ chronic pain
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others
- Family history of mental disorder or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Family history of violence
- Incarceration of self and/or family member
- One or more prior suicide attempts
- Physical or sexual abuse

From 50 to 75% of those considering suicide will give someone – a friend or relative – a warning sign. However, not everyone who is considering suicide will say so, and not everyone who threatens suicide will follow through with it. Every threat of suicide should be taken seriously.

AT HIGEST RISK OF SUICIDE OF ATTEMPTS

- **LGBTQ** – depression, anxiety, substance abuse, discrimination, homophobia, violence, gender nonconformity, self-esteem issues, societal attitudes, family rejection, religion, school, homelessness are all risk factors uniquely molded within the LGBTQ community.
- **LATINO COMMUNITY** – Although Latinos have consistently reported high rates of suicidal behavior there is concern regarding their help-seeking attitudes and behaviors when dealing with distress and suicide contributed to race and/or ethnicity. Research is currently taking place to clarify how culture contributes to decreased help-seeking norms among those with suicidal thoughts.

REFERENCES, RESOURCES TO CONTACT & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Mayo Clinic: Suicide and Suicidal Thoughts (http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/suicidebasics/symptoms/com-20033954)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Suicide Warning Signs (http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/learning/warningsigns.aspx)
- WebMD: Depression Health Center – Recognize the Warning Signs of Suicide (http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/depression-recognizing-signs-of-suicide#3)
- WebMD: Mental Health Center – Recognizing Suicidal Behavior (http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/recognizing-suicidal-behavior)
- American Association of Suicidology (http://www.suicidology.org/)
- Report - Children's Hospital of Colorado: About Teen Suicide

If you need immediate assistance contact the
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-27308255
Colorado Crisis & Support Line 1-844-493-8255

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