

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**  
**from the**  
**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

**YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES**

The following information is provided to inform parents, guardians, and family members about the prevalence of suicide among teens, and to offer resources and links to assist with awareness, prevention, and support.

***Statistics***

- For students aged 10-14, Wisconsin's suicide rate is the 5<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S.
- The rate for students aged 10-19 is 13<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S.—42% higher than the U.S. average
- More than 1 in 5 Wisconsin high school students report symptoms of depression annually
- Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death among youths aged 10-19 in Wisconsin, accounting for more than 17% of all deaths in this age group
- On average, one youth dies by suicide each week (50/year)
- Boys complete suicide four times more often than girls
- Among boys, guns were used in 56% of suicide completions
- Spring is the most common season for emergency room visits and hospitalizations for suicide attempts
- Suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common cause of death, after car accidents and significantly more frequent than homicide and all forms of cancer

***Why should we worry about youth suicide? Are many kids really depressed or suicidal?***

More than one in five Wisconsin high school students report symptoms of depression annually.

***What are the risk factors for suicide?***

- Previous suicide attempts are the strongest predictor of future attempts
- Exposure to suicide of another student, of a loved one, or through the media
- A history of depression or other mental disorders, including drug or alcohol use
- Unsupervised access to firearms, especially during depression or times of perceived crisis
- Poor problem-solving skills, risky or impulsive actions, conflicts, stressful life events

***What are the warning signs? What can parents watch for?***

Early warning signs are behaviors that adults may notice in many children. For some children, these are the first signs they are struggling with depression or a low mood. Be watchful to see if the symptoms persist for more than a few weeks or a month:

- Difficulty concentrating or a decline in quality of school work
- Social withdrawal, personality and mood changes
- In younger children, physical complaints related to emotions (stomach aches, headaches)
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits; too much or too little of either or both
- Preoccupation with death

Urgent warning signs indicate that a child may have made a decision to harm him-/herself:

- Threats or hints about suicide, seriously thinking about it, especially a specific plan
- Impulsive or violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- Refusing help or feeling beyond help; claiming to be a bad person, intolerant of praise
- Hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness

- Being suddenly cheerful after a period of depression (problems no longer worry them)
- Giving away favorite possessions, making a last will and testament, "tying up loose ends"

It's a myth that asking a child how they are doing or if they have had thoughts about harming him-/herself will bring on thoughts of suicide. Another myth is that children won't be honest when asked if they need help. In fact, these children are usually scared and want help.

### **PARENT RESOURCES**

If you are worried about your child or have any reason to suspect he or she may be contemplating suicide, contact the following resources. *Don't wait!*

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- Mental Health American of Wisconsin: [www.mhawisconsin.org](http://www.mhawisconsin.org)
- Helping Others Prevent and Educate About Suicide:  
[www.hopes-wi.org](http://www.hopes-wi.org)
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Consult local telephone directories and/or your county mental health agency for local resources.