

## Youth Suicide Prevention Awareness:

### *What You Need to Know!*

- ◆ Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-19 year olds.
- ◆ Suicide is a tragedy that affects families, schools and communities.
- ◆ For every suicide completion, there are 25 people nationwide who have attempted suicide.
- ◆ Youth suicide is a largely preventable death.
- ◆ With higher awareness of the warning signs, the chances increase that a suicide can be prevented.
- ◆ There are resources available to help those who are facing a suicidal crisis.

## Be Aware of the Warning Signs!

### A person may be suicidal if he or she:

- ◆ talks about suicide
- ◆ exhibits changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- ◆ experiences drastic changes in behavior
- ◆ takes unnecessary risks
- ◆ loses interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- ◆ demonstrates changes in personal appearance and hygiene
- ◆ withdraws from family and/or friends
- ◆ makes a will or makes plans for a funeral, gives away prized possessions
- ◆ has had recent severe losses
- ◆ is preoccupied with death or dying
- ◆ increases use of alcohol and/or drugs
- ◆ draws or writes about death
- ◆ feels overwhelmed by problems
- ◆ feels angry at the world
- ◆ feels others do not care
- ◆ feels helpless to change a situation that is seen as hopeless.
- ◆ becomes suddenly unusually cheerful after a period of depression.

## Be Aware of Life Circumstances

### Conditions that may be a contributing factor are:

- ◆ history of depression
- ◆ history of self-mutilating behavior
- ◆ previous suicidal gestures/attempts
- ◆ discipline issues in school
- ◆ difficulty with the law in the community
- ◆ history of abuse
- ◆ conflicts at home and/or school
- ◆ rejection due to sexual orientation
- ◆ target of harassment and/or isolation by peer groups
- ◆ accessibility to firearms
- ◆ suicide of a close friend or relative
- ◆ rejection by a loved one
- ◆ alcohol and/or drug use
- ◆ recent break up of boyfriend or girlfriend.

### **Be Alert!!!**

**Mood swings and changes are a part of life. One warning sign may not be a clear indication of suicidal intention. However, it is important to discuss openly the stressors and challenges when a pattern of feeling hopeless is observed.**

## How to Help

- ◆ Take all suicidal threats and attempts seriously. It costs nothing if you are wrong; it may be the difference of a life if you are right.
- ◆ Be willing to listen. Allow discussion and expression of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- ◆ Act when you suspect something is wrong. Think the unimaginable and be relieved if you are wrong.
- ◆ Avoid the myth that the person is seeking attention.
- ◆ Realize depression is a real problem and does not go away on its own.
- ◆ Do not keep it a secret. Tell a trusted adult. Professional help is available.
- ◆ Assure the person that you have sensed his/her pain and hurt, and promise to look together for solutions. Follow through on these promises.

## Resources

**Office of Counseling and Student  
Support Services  
Frederick County Public Schools  
301-644-5224**

**Frederick County  
Mental Health Association  
301-663-0011**

**Frederick Memorial  
Hospital Emergency  
240-566-3500**

**Your School Counselor**

## Immediate Response

- ◆ Ask directly if the person is suicidal.
- ◆ Do not leave the suicidal person alone until help is available.
- ◆ Take action if there is a high risk. Call 911 or take the person to the hospital immediately.
- ◆ Discuss concerns with the school counselor, social worker, psychologist, nurse, or administrator.

Parents assure your child that you will do what it takes to keep him/her alive; he/she must promise to work with you.

**For further assistance call the :**

**Maryland Youth Crisis  
Hotline  
1-800-422-0009**

## References:

Youth Suicide Prevention In the Family; Baltimore County Public Schools

American Association of Suicidology, 2001

This brochure is distributed annually at grades 6 and 9 and is found on [www.fcps.org](http://www.fcps.org). Please retain for future reference.

# Suicide Prevention: Helping Those Who Hurt

*It's Everyone's  
Responsibility*

**Frederick County  
Hotline  
301-662-2255**