



# Wellness Today *For Teachers*

## What Can Your Do?

As a teacher, you are in a prime position to help prevent suicide in children. If you notice one or more warning signs of suicide in a student, take note and take action!

- Stay calm and take the situation seriously.
- Ask the student if he or she is thinking about suicide.
- Listen to how the student is feeling and about what's going on in that student's life.
- Reassure the student that those feelings won't last forever; don't accuse or judge the student for having those feelings.
- Be sure there is nothing in reach that the student could use to inflict self-harm.
- Stay with the student until you can get help. This can include a resource officer, school counselor, mental health professional, parent, or, in serious crises, police officer.

## Understanding Risk Factors and Warning Signs of Suicide

**Risk factors**, or the likelihood someone will die by suicide based on personal characteristics or environment, and **warning signs**, indicators that someone will attempt suicide, are both crucial parts in the prevention of suicide. Understanding what each is can help you recognize when your students may need help.

### Examples of Suicide Risk Factors:

- One or more prior suicide attempts
- Social isolation
- Had a family member or friend die by suicide
- Abuses drugs and alcohol
- Has access to lethal means: guns, ropes, pills, knives, etc.
- Suffers from a mental disorder, such as depression, or suffers from a chronic disease or disability
- Does not have access to mental health care
- Background characteristics, such as race, culture, or sexual orientation, that may lead to prejudice, bullying, and stress

### Examples of Warning Signs:

- Talk:
  - » Talking about wanting to die or about taking one's life
  - » Talking about being a burden to others or being worthless or without a purpose
  - » Talking about feeling hopeless, being in unbearable pain, or feeling trapped
- Behavior (especially if it occurs after a painful event):
  - » Researching ideas about how to die from suicide or gathering methods/means of suicide
  - » Sleeping too little or too much
  - » Increased use of alcohol or drugs
  - » Giving away prized possessions or saying goodbye
- Mood:
  - » Exhibiting extreme mood swings
  - » Withdrawing from activities previously enjoyed
  - » Showing sudden relief or improvement
  - » Acting uncharacteristically anxious, angry, agitated, or reckless