



# YOUTH SUICIDE: HELPING YOUR STUDENT

## 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 the 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.

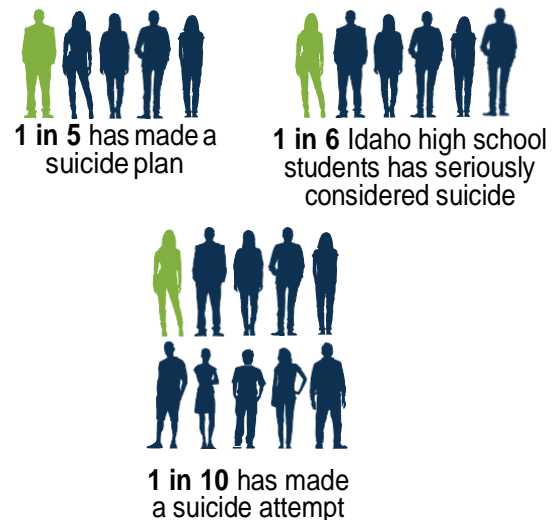
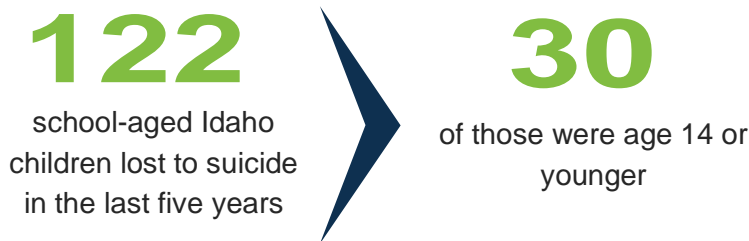
- 1 Supervise the student constantly (or make sure he/she is in a secure environment supervised by a caring adult) until he/she can be seen by a mental health professional.

- 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, e.g., obtaining a gun or medications
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

### Why Suicide Prevention is Important



\*2019 Idaho Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics.

\*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 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.

**Depressed** youth should 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 ways that some young people cope with feelings of depression or loneliness.

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

### Other General Risk Factors Include:

- Mental health disorders or 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](http://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.

## Suicide Prevention Hotline

If you, or someone you know, is in crisis or emotional distress, please  
call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or  
text 1-208-398-HELP (4357)



by JANNUS

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