

Youth Suicide Prevention

Helping Your Students



IDAHO
LIVES
PROJECT

School Personnel Make a Difference

School personnel spend more time with our youth than any other professionals, and often, more time than parents. In Idaho, school clinicians always have a duty to warn parents or guardians if a student is suicidal. Other school staff are also in a key position to be suicide prevention gatekeepers and can save lives. If education professionals truly do not know that a student is suicidal, they are not liable. Schools must demonstrate “good faith” efforts to prevent suicide and districts are required to have best-practice protocols in place for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. Visit idaholives.org for more information.

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
- Unexplained or increases in anger or irritability
- Feelings of hopelessness or burdensomeness
- Nightmares in adolescents or older youth

Trust Your Gut

Knowing the warning signs for suicide can save a life. 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.

Take Action

If you encounter a student you believe is at immediate risk, don't be afraid to ask if they are suicidal. Be persistent if necessary. Trust your gut feelings.

- 1** Supervise the student constantly (or make sure they are in a secure environment supervised by a caring adult) until they can be seen by a mental health professional. Never leave the student alone.
- 2** Escort the student to the counselor or other mental health professional. Never leave the student alone.
- 3** Provide any additional information to the school counselor that could help with the screening process. The counselor or administrator will notify the parents. Follow your schools' policies.
- 4** If the student is in possession of lethal means, call 911.

Why Suicide Prevention is Important

The 2019 Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that 1 in 5 Idaho High School students has seriously considered suicide; 1 in 6 has made a suicide plan and 1 in 10 has made a suicide attempt.



1 in 5 has made a suicide plan



1 in 6 has seriously considered suicide



1 in 10 has made a suicide attempt

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. Ensure youth know they belong and are accepted for who they are.

Depression in young people can be difficult to detect. It is extremely important that depressed youth 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, Self-Injury or Sex are ways some young people cope with feelings of depression or loneliness. However, such behaviors only lead to new problems and a deeper level of depression. Seek appropriate professional help.

Recent Release from inpatient treatment is a time of significantly high risk for suicide death. Appropriate follow-up care after a young person has received inpatient treatment must include school re-entry plans and family involvement in recovery. For free follow-up services and support, contact BPA Health at (208) 947-5155.



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 risky behaviors and increase academic performance.

Be Prepared to Respond to a Suicide Death

Appropriate response according to best-practice protocols is critical. This response is called postvention and is handled by school administration and mental health staff or crisis team. Plan for postvention in advance. For evidence-based postvention guidelines visit idaholives.org.

Means Matter

Easy access to lethal means increases suicide risk and chances of death. Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and their method can save a life. Safe storage of weapons, drugs and other means saves lives.

Counselors can advise parents to temporarily remove or lock up firearms from the home and lock up medications. Gun locks and medication lock boxes are available from Idaho Lives Project.

Supporting documents and other resources for elements listed in this brochure can be found at idaholives.org.



Youth Suicide Prevention Program

Youth Suicide Prevention & Safety Coordination
Idaho State Department of Education
Idaho Lives Project
(208) 332-6816
idaholives.org



Idaho Crisis & Suicide Hotline
by JANNUS

If you or someone you know is experiencing an emotional or suicide crisis, contact the Idaho Crisis & Suicide Hotline by calling or texting 988.

Some of the information here is courtesy of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Visit their website for more information on suicide prevention for schools at sprc.org.

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