

What You May Not Know About Child and Adolescent Suicide

The Problem

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds in the United States and is the sixth leading cause of death for 5 to 14 year olds in the United States.
- In Missouri in 2006, 21 children died of self-inflicted injury.
- 14 of the children were ages 15-17 years old; 7 of the children were ages 10-14 years old.

Warning Signs of Suicide (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Drug and alcohol use
- Violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- Personality change
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Difficulty concentrating, or a decline in schoolwork
- Threats of suicide
- Acting out behaviors and running away
- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Doesn't respond to praise

(American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

What Parents and Others Can Do to Help a Suicidal Child or Adolescent

- Ask the child or teen if they feel depressed or think about suicide or death. Speaking honestly and openly allows a child to confide in you and gives you a chance to express your concern. Listen to his or her thoughts and feelings in a caring and respectful manner.
- Let the child or teen know that you care and want to help.
- Supply the child or teen with local resources, such as a crisis hotline or the location of a mental health clinic. If the child or teen is a student, find out if there are any available mental health professionals at the school and let the child know about them.
- Seek professional help. It is essential to seek expert advice from a mental health professional that has experience helping depressed children and teens.
- Alert key adults in the child's life-family, friends, and teachers. Inform the child's parents or primary caregiver, and recommend that they seek professional assistance for their child or teen.
- It is important for children with behavioral problems, possible mental disorders (such as depression and impulse-control disorders) and substance abuse problems to get early treatment.
- Limit young people's access to lethal means of suicide, including firearms.
- Always take threats of suicide seriously.

(Mental Health America)

Resources

1-800-SUICIDE, <http://www.hopeline.com/>

1-800-999-9999, <http://www.nineline.org/>

1-800-273-TALK, <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention/concerned.asp>

Life Crisis Services (St. Louis area), 314-647-HELP

Mid-Missouri Crisis Line, 1-888-761-HELP

Missouri Department of Mental Health, <http://www.dmh.mo.gov/cps/issues/suicide.htm>

KUTO (Kids Under Twenty-One), <http://www.kuto.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center, <http://www.sprc.org/>

American Academy of Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry,

<http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?section=Facts+for+Families&name=Teen+Suicide>