

# Children's Mental Health Matters!

a Maryland public education campaign

## Facts For Families Suicide

Suicide is the act of taking one's own life and continues to be a serious problem among young people. Some youth may experience strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while growing up. These can be very unsettling and can intensify self-doubts. For some, suicide may appear to be a solution to their problems and stress.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth 15-24 (12.3%) in the U.S. In Maryland, between 1990-2006, there were 1,219 completed suicides among 10-24 year-olds. And, for every completed suicide by a youth, it is estimated that 100 to 200 attempts are made. However, building strong family relationships, having the knowledge of the risks and warning signs of suicide/depression, and having access to prevention and intervention resources will often decrease the likelihood of suicide in youth.

### How it affects my child

#### Warning signs may include:

- Depressed mood, ADHD or other mental health problem
- Family loss or instability, significant problems with parent
- Expressions of suicidal thoughts, or talk of death or the afterlife during moments of sadness or boredom
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Difficulties in dealing with sexual orientation
- Poor ability to manage one's negative emotions
- No longer interested in or enjoying activities that once were pleasurable
- Impulsive, aggressive behavior, frequent expressions of rage
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Engaging in high risk behaviors (e.g., fire-setting, involvement in cults/gangs, cruelty to animals)
- Social isolation and poor self-esteem
- Witnessing or being exposed to family violence or abuse
- Having a relative who completed or attempted suicide
- Being preoccupied with themes and acts of violence on TV shows, movies, music, magazines, comic books, video

games and internet sites

- Giving away meaningful belongings
- Frequent episodes of running away or being incarcerated

*IMPORTANT: Some children may exhibit many warning signs yet appear to be coping with their situation and others may show no signs and yet still feel suicidal. The only way to know for sure is to ask your child and to consult a mental health professional.*

**If you are worried that your child may be thinking about suicide** ask your child directly if he/she is considering suicide. Ask whether he/she has made a specific plan and has done anything to carry it out. Explain the reasons for your concerns. Listen openly to your child, tell your child that you care deeply and that no matter how overwhelming his or her problems seem, help is available. Many children make suicide threats—they should be taken seriously.

**Immediately get your child professional help** from a doctor, community health center, counselor, psychologist, social worker, youth worker or minister. In Maryland, call **1-800-422-0009**. You can

Children's  
Mental  
Health  
Matters.org

A MARYLAND PUBLIC  
EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

coordinated by

mhamd   
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

MCF  
maryland coalition of families  
for children's mental health

[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

also call **1-800-SUICIDE** or look in your local phone book for suicide hotlines and crisis centers.

If your child is in immediate danger, do not leave your child alone and seek help immediately. You can call 911 or take your child to the emergency room. If your child has a detailed plan or appears acutely suicidal and will not talk, he or she could be in immediate danger and it is important to get help right away. Do not leave your child alone and seek help immediately.

**Learn warning signs, risks, and other factors associated with suicide** especially if your child has made suicidal attempts or threats in the past.

**Offer support to your child.** Make sure your child knows that you are there for him/her, encourage him/her to seek you out in times of need, and if you are not there at the time when your child feels depressed or suicidal, have another support person to go to for help.

**Secure any firearms, dangerous weapons and medications** away from the child and preferably remove them from the house.

### Hotlines & Crisis Centers

#### **Maryland Crisis Hotline**

1-800-422-0009

#### **National Suicide Hotline**

1-800-SUICIDE

#### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK

1-800-273-8255

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Default.aspx>

### Resource/Links

#### **Children's Mental Health Matters!**

*Facts for Families – First Steps in Seeking Help*

[www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)

#### **American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

This site contains resources for families to promote an understanding of mental illnesses.

[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

*Teen Suicide*

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/suicide.htm>

#### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

<http://www.afsp.org>

#### **National Association of School Psychologists**

*Preventing Suicide: Information for Families and Caregivers*

<http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/cq354suicide.aspx>

*Times of Tragedy: Preventing Suicide in Troubled Children and Youth, Part I: Tips for Parents and Schools*

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis\\_safety/suicidept1\\_general.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/suicidept1_general.aspx)

#### **National Institute of Mental Health**

NIMH strives to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness through basic clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure. Visit NIMH for information on clinical trial and mental health information, statistics, and resources.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

#### **Suicide Awareness\Voices of Education (SAVE)**

<http://www.save.org/>

#### **Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program for Parents**

<http://www.yellowribbon.org/Msg-to-Parents.htm>

MHAMD ~ 443-901-1550 ~ [www.mhamd.org](http://www.mhamd.org)

MCF ~ 410-730-8267 ~ [www.mdcoalition.org](http://www.mdcoalition.org)

The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMd) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration and MD CARES. The Campaign goal, with over 80 partners across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health. For more information, please visit [www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org](http://www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org)