

# Children's Mental Health Matters!

a Maryland public education campaign

## Facts For Families Suicide & LGBTQ Youth

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 depression, 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.

Research has shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and/or questioning (LGBTQ) youth are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide than straight peers. However, sexual orientation is not noted on death certificates in the U.S. so exact completion rates are difficult to report. Studies have also confirmed that LGBTQ youth have higher rates of suicidal ideation than their straight peers and often have more severe risk factors. It is important to note that being LGBTQ is not a risk factor in and of itself; however, minority stressors that LGBTQ youth encounter - such as discrimination and harassment - are directly associated with suicidal behavior as well as indirectly with risk factors for suicide.

### How it affects youth

#### Warning signs specific to LGBTQ Youth may include:

- Previous suicide attempts
- A diagnosable mental illness and/or substance use disorder
- Relationship issues
- A high rate of victimization/bullying
- Difficulties in dealing with sexual orientation
- Lack of family acceptance
- Expressing hopelessness or helplessness
- Having a plan

### IMPORTANT

*Some youth 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 the youth and to consult a mental health professional.*

### How can we help?

**Some factors which may help to lower a youth's risk of considering suicide are:**

- Programs and services that increase social support and decrease social isolation among LGBTQ youth (support

groups, hotlines, social networking)

- Access to effective, culturally competent care
- Support from medical and mental health professionals
- Coping, problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide
- Strong connections to family
- Family acceptance of one's sexuality and/or gender identity
- A feeling of safety and support at school
- Connectedness at school through peer groups
- Positive connections with friends who share similar interests
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide
- Positive role models and self-esteem

**If you are worried that a youth may be thinking about suicide** ask him/her 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

Children's  
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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)

concerns. Listen openly. Be sure to express that you care deeply and that no matter how overwhelming his or her problems seem, help is available. All suicide threats should be taken seriously.

**Immediately seek professional help** from a doctor, community health center, counselor, psychologist, social worker, youth worker or minister if you suspect a suicide attempt. In Maryland, call **1-800-422-0009**. You can also call **1-800-SUICIDE** or look in your local phone book for suicide hotlines and crisis centers.

If the youth is in immediate danger, do not leave him/her alone and seek help immediately. You can call 911 or take him/her to the emergency room. If the youth 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 the youth alone and seek help immediately.

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

**Offer support.**

### Hotlines & Crisis Centers

**Maryland Youth 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>

**The Trevor Project**  
TREVOR LIFELINE: 1-866-488-7386

### 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>

**Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network**  
*Talking About Suicide & LGBT Populations*  
<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2736.html>

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

**Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)**  
<http://www.save.org>

**The Trevor Project**  
A national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth.  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.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)