

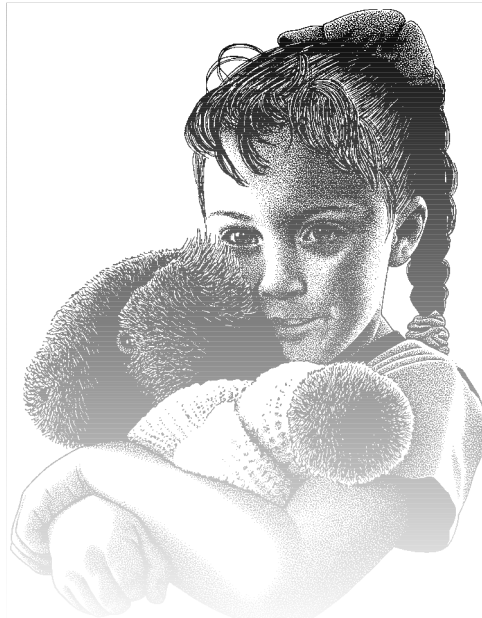
What Can a Parent Do?

- Take suicidal threat seriously. It costs nothing if you are wrong; it may be the difference of a life if you are right.
- Be an “askable” parent. Make it clear that problems can be shared and concerns will be listened to through open discussion.
- Act when you suspect that something is wrong with your child. Think the unimaginable and be relieved if you are wrong.
- Avoid assuming that suicidal comments reflect attention-seeking behaviors.
- Recognize that depression is a very real problem for young people: it is a problem that requires direct intervention.
- Seek professional help when warning signs are detected. Be willing to participate in family counseling to support your child.

What Can Be Done For A Suicidal Youth?

Create a positive family climate:

- Ask, “What did you mean when you said, ‘I wish I were dead!’?”
- Examine recent problems with your child. Assure your child that you have sensed his or her pain and hurt, and promise to look together for solutions.
- Follow through on these promises.
- When a suicide is threatened, find out the plan for the suicide, the means being considered, and the young person’s access to the means.
- Assure your child that you will do what it takes to keep him or her alive; your child must promise to work with you.
- Point out that most problems are temporary setbacks; suicide is forever.
- Discuss concerns with the school’s counselor or psychologist.
- Take an actively suicidal child to a:
 - therapist, who can see him or her immediately.
 - community mental health agency.
 - hospital emergency room with a psychiatric unit.
- When in doubt, call the Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline 1-800-422-0009 (open 24 hours/7 days a week).



Community Resources

Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center
410-531-6006

Howard County Mental Health Authority
410-313-7350

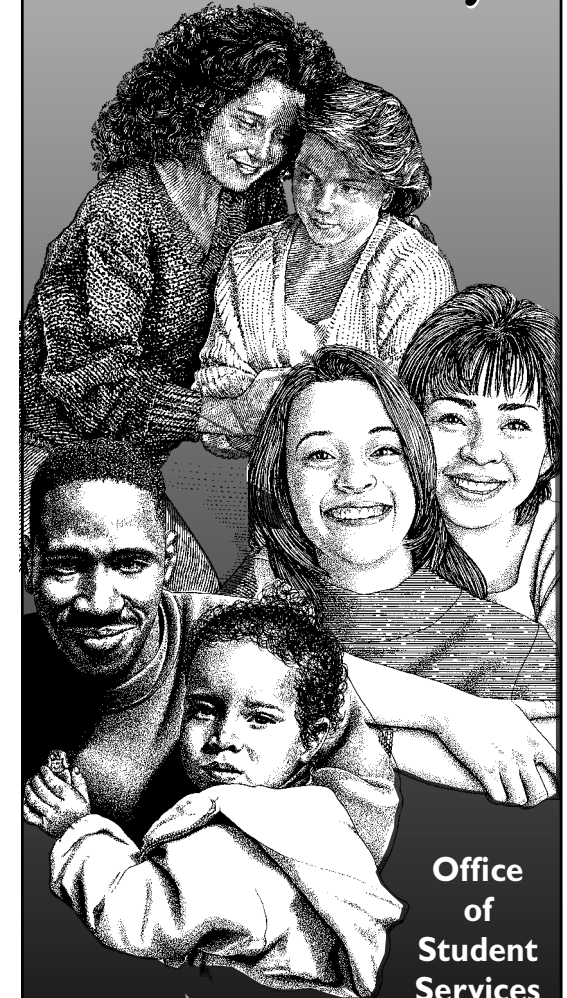
Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline
1-800-422-0009

NAMI
(National Alliance of Mentally Ill)
410-772-9300

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Office of Student Services
Howard County Public Schools
10920 Route 108 • Ellicott City, MD 21042
410-313-6776

Youth Suicide Prevention In the Family



**Office
of
Student
Services**

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Youth Suicide Prevention Awareness: A Family Matter

Why Should Parents Be Concerned?

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 -24 year olds.
- Suicide is a devastating trauma to a family's unity.
- Suicide complicates grief by introducing blame, guilt, and second-guessing.
- In the United States, a young person completes suicide every hour and fifty-three minutes every day of the year.
- For every two murders in the USA, there are three completed suicides.
- Youth suicide is a largely preventable death.
- With increased awareness of the warning signs of youth suicide, the chances increase that a suicide can be prevented.
- There are resources available to support families facing a suicide crisis.



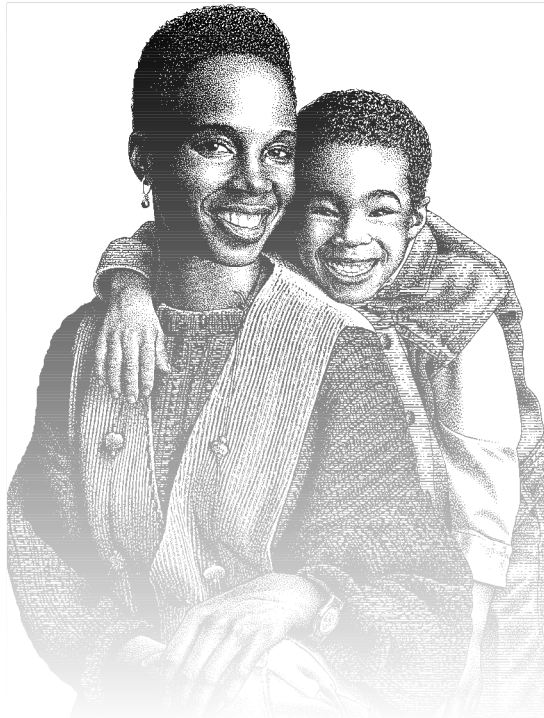
Warning Signs of Possible Suicidal Intent

*Behaviors: If they talk about suicide,
it is already on their minds.*

- Threats to take one's life
- Drawings or writings about one's death
- High-risk behaviors, endangering one's life
- Dramatic changes in appearance, withdrawal from family or friends
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Previous suicidal gestures or attempts
- Giving away of prized possessions, making a will or planning for one's funeral
- Poor communication about one's needs

*Moods: Depression, anger and feelings of
despair may not be a teenage phase. Ninety
percent of those who complete suicide suffered
from depression.*

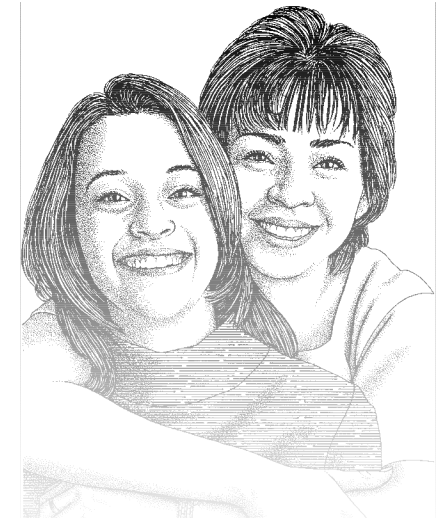
- A sense of being overwhelmed by problems
- Feelings that others do not care about their problems
- Feelings of helplessness to change a situation they see as hopeless
- Fantasies of revenge
- Impulsive, poor problem-solving skills
- In pain, which they want to end immediately



Risk Factors for Suicide

"While some life circumstances and stressors are not warning signs of possible suicidal intent, they may be factors associated with suicidal behaviors."

- Difficulties with discipline in school or with the law in the community
- History of abuse
- Academic pressures that seem overwhelming
- Living in the midst of conflict in home or school
- Rejection due to sexual orientation
- Being a victim of bullying or harassment
- Living in a home where firearms are readily accessible
- Multiple losses
- Suicide of a close friend or relative



What Should Parents Know about Suicidal Warning Signs?

Young people go through a number of changes and may express broad mood swings as part of normal development.

One warning sign may not be a clear indication of suicidal intention. But a pattern of hopeless feelings about self and a sense of helplessness in the face of stressors and life challenges should be discussed openly. Setbacks may become crises for vulnerable young people.