

Responding to Students with Suicidal Ideation: Information for Teachers and Staff

What to Look For

Verbal Signs: Verbal expression of hopelessness, wanting to die, or being with a deceased person.

“I wish I were dead.”

“You’ll be sorry when I’m gone.”

“No one cares whether I live or die.”

Peers talking about another student.

Physical and Behavioral Signs:

-Changes in physical appearance and/or personality.

-Fascination with death through poems, journal entries, e-mails, websites, music, movies, artwork and ****Writing and Graffiti on Binders****

-Suicide notes- may find these in classrooms, locker rooms, or bathrooms.

-Giving away possessions.

-Self-Mutilation-****Cuts on body ...usually on the arms****

What to Do

“It is the student’s perception of the events that is important, not the adult’s perception.” Brown (1987).
Whether you perceive the student as “manipulating” or “trying to get attention” for his/her suicidal ideation, all reports need to be handled in a thorough and earnest manner.

1) *Listen and provide support:*

-Do not be judgmental or minimize the student’s feelings.

-Do not make any promises or bargain with the student about keeping the suicidal ideation a secret.

-Do not appear shocked or upset with the student.

2) *Provide close supervision of the student.*

-Do not leave the suicidal student alone.

-Do not try to handle everything alone.

3) *Have student escorted to the identified school personnel who has been trained in screening for suicidal ideation (Gatekeeper).*

-Tell the Gatekeeper about any relevant information regarding the student (precipitating events and warning signs).

What Will Happen Next

The Gatekeeper will screen for suicidal risk and direct the student to the appropriate intervention(s), such as: in-school counseling, counseling outside the school, speaking with the School Resource Officer, returning to class with support, releasing into parental/guardian care. *In all cases in which a student is at risk for harming him/herself, parents will be notified.* Feedback about the severity of the situation, as well as how you as a teacher can help, will be provided.