

SUICIDE AWARENESS

Information taken from www.makeadifferenceforkids.org

Suicide among young people is a serious problem. September 7-13 is known as **SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK** in Kentucky.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Kentuckians 15-19 yrs. old.

Almost as many teens die by suicide as those who die from all natural causes combined. (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*)

Many teenagers have thoughts of death. These can stem from a variety of causes, such as stress, confusion, self-doubt, depression, or fear. It is important to take a suicide attempt, or talk of suicide, seriously. While there is no way to reliably figure the exact ratio of attempted suicides to completed suicides, the National Institute of Mental Health believes that as many as 25 suicides are attempted for each one that is completed. That means that for every teen suicide that you hear of, there are probably at least 25 suicide attempts made. And this does not even cover the teenage suicide attempts and completed suicides that are never heard about. Understanding that a teen suicide attempt is a call for help is essential in preventing a completed attempt later.

Parents should be aware of the following signs of adolescents who may try to kill themselves:

- change in eating and sleeping habits
- withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- drug and alcohol use
- unusual neglect of personal appearance
- marked personality change
- persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- not tolerating praise or rewards

A teenager who is planning to commit suicide may also:

- complain of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside
- give verbal hints with statements such as: I won't be a problem for you much longer, Nothing matters, It's no use, and I won't see you again
- put his or her affairs in order, for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.
- become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression

- have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)

If one or more of these signs occurs, or if a child or adolescent says, I want to kill myself, or I'm going to commit suicide, always take the statement seriously and immediately seek assistance from a qualified mental health professional.

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Teen Suicide, July 2004 (Online) and Teen Suicide (www.teensuicide.us)

Here is an easy mnemonic to remember the warning signs:

IS PATH WARM?

Ideation

Substance Abuse

Purposelessness

Anxiety

Trapped

Hopelessness

Withdrawal

Anger

Recklessness

Mood Changes