

HENRY COUNTY R-I HIGH SCHOOL



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Dear Parent/Guardian:

During this challenging year, school staff are working to teach students about mental health and how to seek help if they are worried about themselves or a friend. We are using a program called *SOS Signs of Suicide*. The program teaches students about this difficult topic and encourages them to seek help.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has also enacted the requirement of schools to implement youth suicide awareness and prevention practices as part of their MSIP 6 Comprehensive Guide to the Missouri School Improvement Program. WHS has chosen the SOS curriculum as it has been used by thousands of schools for over 20 years. Studies have shown that it effectively teaches students about depression and suicide while reducing the number of students' self-reported suicide attempts.

Through the program, students learn:

- that depression is treatable, so they are encouraged to seek help
- how to identify depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- to ACT (Acknowledge, Care and Tell a trusted adult) if concerned about themselves or a friend
- who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Students will watch age-appropriate video clips and participate in a guided discussion about depression, suicide, and what to do if they are concerned about a friend. Following the video, students will complete a brief depression screening tool. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression but does indicate whether a young person should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional. At the end of class, students will complete an exit slip which asks whether they would like to talk to an adult about any concerns. School staff will conduct brief meetings with any student asking to talk.

We encourage you to visit www.sosignsofsuicide.org/parent for information on warning signs for youth suicide, useful resources, and some of the key messages students will learn. We are including: (1) an infographic for you to reinforce the ACT message at home; and (2) an info sheet with resources.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation in this program, or you do **NOT** wish for your child to participate in the SOS Program in school, please contact me or Mrs. Foster, our school counselor, at 660-647-3106, by **February 10, 2023**. If we do not hear from you by then we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

Mr. Justin Wells
High School Principal

SOS for Parents Infographic

Acknowledge that you're seeing signs of suicide in your child.

A



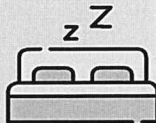
Major changes in behavior



Sounding really down or helpless



Talking about suicide



Sleeping more or less



Increased anger or agitation



Withdrawal from family or friends

Show your child that you Care.

You can show you care by being a good listener and asking questions.

Tell me more about it.

C

I'm here for you.

It's OK to feel this way.

There is help available.

Tell a professional.

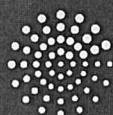


If you're having concerns about your child **reach out** to their pediatrician or school counselor.

Most people thinking about suicide are struggling with a mental health condition like depression. With professional help, people begin to feel much better.

T

Help is always available. If you are concerned about a student, colleague, friend, or yourself – reach out. **Call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or text the Crisis Text Line at 741741 for free 24/7 support.**



MindWise
SOS SIGNS OF SUICIDE



LEARN TO ACT

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD SAVE A LIFE

Our school uses SOS Signs of Suicide, a national prevention program that educates students about warning signs for suicide and encourages them to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, and Tell a trusted adult) whether they have concerns about themselves or a friend. How would you respond if your child told you their friend might be thinking about suicide? **Check in with your child to:**

Acknowledge any concerns they have about the way a friend is talking or acting.

Care: Show them how much you care by listening and taking their concerns seriously.

Tell: Reach out to their friend's parents or contact the school for support. Never keep a secret when concerned about the safety of a child.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD

Take some time to start a conversation about mental health. This can be tough for families as often in our society, mental health isn't discussed openly like physical health. Feelings of depression or anxiety are often hidden because youth are confused, embarrassed, or ashamed. You can help protect your child and their friends by talking to them.

- » **Ask open-ended questions.** Let your child steer the conversation to what they want to talk about.
- » **Don't rush to solve their problems.** Instead, ask what they think would help a situation.
- » **Be available and make sure your child knows it.** "I'm around if you want to talk later" may help.
- » **Try talking on a walk.** The relaxed atmosphere makes it easier for some kids to open up.

CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD?

Take a Mental Health Screening >>

<https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/sos>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988 for free 24/7 support.

Crisis Text Line: text 741741 for free 24/7 support.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

SAMHSA Treatment Locator: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>