

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The week of September 8-14 is National Suicide Prevention Week. [As we kick off the week of Suicide Prevention Awareness Week/Month, your attention is called to the fact that](#) our youth are in the grip of a mental health crisis, as increasing pressure from school, social media/social pressure, lack of healthy coping skills and a lack of connectedness take their toll. With the rate of suicide increasing, having ***awareness and prevention information*** is extremely important.

Suicide is the ***tenth*** leading cause of death in the United States. [Suicide is the \*\*\*second\*\*\* leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 34 and the \*\*\*third\*\*\* leading cause of death for 5-14-year-olds following accidents and cancer.](#) Suicide rates in very young people has been increasing exponentially in the United States and around the world. These new realities are impacting significantly not only on those youth at risk but to the importance placed on youth's overall emotional mental wellness /well-being as well as the gravity with which mental illness and its treatment is viewed.

In our school population, youth completing suicide, or youth experiencing suicide ideation, is occurring at much younger ages. Some of those contributing factors that could lead to suicide ideation or suicide include ***school bullying and cyber bullying, access and exposure to effective means of completing suicide on the internet, and even TV shows that sensationalize suicide*** all add to the growing trend of ending life at younger and younger ages. Counteracting negative stress cycles in our youth's daily lives includes Awareness and Prevention Activities and Resources.

Parents, guardians, family members, friends, teachers, school administrators, coaches and extracurricular activity leaders, mentors, service providers can play a role in preventing suicide and supporting youth by being aware of the warning signs and risk factors of suicide.

Listed below are signs to be aware of when interacting with youth you may be concerned about.



## Warning Signs

- Talking or writing about wanting to die
- Expressing Helplessness
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive Behavior
- Extreme Mood Swings
- Sleeping too much or too little

## Risk Factors

Suicide does not typically have a sudden onset. There are a number of stressors that can contribute to a youth's anxiety and unhappiness, increasing the possibility of a suicide attempt. A number of them are described below.

- Depression, Mental Illness and Substance Abuse
- Aggression and Fighting
- Home Environment
- Community Environment
- School Environment
- Previous Suicide Attempts
- Cultural Factors
- Family History/Toxic Stress
- Self-Harm
- Situational Crises



**Remember:** Never be reluctant to get involved and always take any student's expressed desire or intent to harm themselves seriously. If you suspect a young person with suicidal ideation, take action immediately; do not leave the student without adult supervision, and follow the **OCPS Threat Response process**. Suicide *is* Preventable.