

Suicide

FAMILY CRISIS EDUCATION SERVICES



A Guide for Parents

Suicide prevention for parents involves taking steps to support your child's mental health and well-being, while also being aware of the **warning signs** and risk factors associated with suicide:

- 1. Talking about suicide:** A child or teen talking about suicide, making comments such as “I want to die” or “I wish I could disappear.”
- 2. Changes in behavior:** Exhibiting sudden and significant changes in behavior, such as withdrawing from social activities, showing a lack of interest in things they used to enjoy, or expressing feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- 3. Changes in mood:** Extreme mood swings, such as going from feeling very sad to very angry.
- 4. Self-harm:** Engaging in self-harm behaviors, such as cutting or burning themselves.
- 5. Increased substance use:** Using drugs or alcohol to cope with their emotions or to numb their feelings.
- 6. Changes in sleep or eating patterns:** Noticeable changes in their sleep or eating patterns, such as sleeping too much or too little or eating significantly more or less than usual.

How You Can Help:

It is important for parents to monitor their child's safety and support their physical and emotional well-being. Although we may assume that our child's suicidal warning signs are “just a phase” in their normal development, we are responsible for taking the following steps to address any warning signs we observe:

- 1. Express your concern:** Directly ask your child if they are thinking of harming themselves, wishing to be dead, or have a plan to die?
- 2. Encourage open communication:** Encourage your child to express their thoughts and feelings openly and listen without criticism.
- 3. Monitor your child's behavior:** Keep an eye on your child's behavior and mood, and look out for any warning signs of suicidal ideation. If you notice any changes, seek professional help.
- 4. Remove access to lethal means:** If your child is at risk of suicide, remove any lethal means from your home, such as firearms or prescription medications.
- 5. Promote healthy habits:** Encourage your child to engage in healthy habits, such as exercise, good nutrition, and adequate sleep. These habits can help improve their mental health and reduce their risk of suicidal ideation.
- 6. Take care of yourself:** Parenting a child with possible suicidal ideation can be emotionally challenging. Make sure to take care of yourself, too, by seeking support from family, friends, or a mental health provider.
- 7. Take suicidal ideation seriously:** If your child expresses thoughts of suicide or self-harm, take them seriously and seek professional help immediately.
- 8. Seek professional help:** A mental health provider can assess your child's risk of suicide and provide appropriate treatment and support. They can also work with you to create a safety plan for your child.

Seeking Professional Support

Remember, suicidal ideation is a serious concern, and it is important to seek professional help if you're concerned about your child's mental health. A mental health counselor can assess your child's level of risk and treatment solutions. With appropriate treatment and support, many children and teens can recover and thrive.

If you believe your child is in immediate danger of harming themselves, seek emergency medical attention right away.