

Suicide In Youth



What is it?

Suicide is a public health problem that can have significant effects on youth, families, peers, and communities. The causes of suicide among youth are complex and involve many factors. Developmentally, the years between childhood and adulthood represent a critical period of transition and significant cognitive, mental, emotional, and social change. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, navigating new milestones in preparation for adult roles involving education, employment, relationships, and living circumstances can be difficult. These transitions can lead to various mental health challenges that can be associated with increased risk for suicide.

- Transitions in adolescence can lead to various mental health challenges that can be associated with increased risk for suicide.
- Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth aged 15-24.
- Risk factors do not mean someone will definitely hurt themselves, but rather, indicate that someone is at greater risk.
- Asking directly about suicide will not increase someone's risk for suicide and will not put the idea in their head.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are unhealthy behaviors, compromised coping skills and negative aspects of a person's home and school life that increase the likelihood that the teen may hurt themselves. Risk factors do not mean that someone will definitely hurt themselves, but rather, indicate that someone is at greater risk. Some risk factors include:

- a previous suicide attempt or knowing someone who died by suicide
- mental health concerns
- experience of abuse or harassment
- dealing with a recent loss or stressful life event
- not having an adult to go to for help

Increased Risk

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth aged 15-24. For some groups of youth, the incidence of suicidal behavior is notably higher:

- Youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems
- LGBTQ youth, especially the transgender population, those who are homeless, have run away from home, or are in contact with the foster care or juvenile justice systems
- American Indian/Alaska Native youth

Know The Warning Signs

Parents, guardians, family members, friends, teachers, school administrators, coaches and extracurricular activity leaders, mentors, service providers, and many others can play a role in preventing suicide and supporting youth. Knowing the warning signs is critical.



**CONNECTICUT
Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)
www.ctclearinghouse.org

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Warning signs for those at risk of suicide include:

- Talking about wanting to die
- Feeling hopeless, having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Seeking revenge
- Feeling like a burden on others
- Looking for methods and making plans such as searching online or buying a gun
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Displaying rage and extreme mood swings

The risk of suicide is greater if a behavior is new, has increased, or if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. Paying attention to warning signs for mental health challenges that can be associated with increased risk for suicide is also important.

Start The Conversation

Adolescents experience a wide range of changes in their body and brain that may lead to behavioral changes but if you become concerned about someone, trust your instincts. Engaging in a conversation to get a better understanding of what they are experiencing will help you to better provide support and address the severity of the feelings.

- Starting the conversation can be as easy as asking “Are you okay?” and taking it from there.
- Listen closely and without judgment.
- Follow up with questions to keep the conversation going.
- Try to avoid suggesting quick fixes or solutions but rather validate their feelings and provide continuous support.

If the teen is not ready to discuss what is going on, be sure to leave an open invitation to talk later. Remind them that you care and are there to help, not judge. They may be ready to talk when you least expect it. Do not hesitate to talk directly with a teen about their changes in mood or level of stress, or if they are thinking about suicide. Asking directly about suicide will not increase their risk for suicide and will not put the idea in their head. Rather, it creates an opportunity to have an honest conversation and demonstrate that you care enough to ask these difficult questions.

If you are in a life threatening situation, dial 911 immediately. If you are in crisis, dial 211 in Connecticut. Outside Connecticut call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988.

Connecticut Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call 988

In an Emergency
Call 911

**CT Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services**
www.ct.gov/DMHAS

24/7 Access Line
1.800.563.4086

2-1-1 of Connecticut
www.211ct.org or call 2-1-1

National Resources

**Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration**
www.samhsa.gov