



# How to Prevent Suicide in School Communities

## What to DO

- ✓ **If a student is threatening suicide, taking steps to attempt suicide, or having any kind of medical emergency, call 911.**<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ **If a student needs crisis support and you are unable to speak to a mental health professional on campus, call 988.**
- ✓ **Look out for signs of suicide risk** such as hopelessness, making a plan, severe emotional distress, and major behavior changes including irritability, sleep problems, anger, and withdrawing from social interactions.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ **If a student appears to be at-risk, take action by making sure they see a mental health professional immediately.** If a student discusses or shows any signs of suicide risk, have a school mental health professional (such as a counselor, social worker, or a school psychologist) conduct a risk assessment immediately.
- ✓ **Build a system of support to prevent suicide.** This includes psychoeducation, screening, tier 2 mental health interventions, crisis response, and postvention.
- ✓ **Encourage help-seeking.** Actively reduce students' stigma and fear of asking for help. Send clear messages that adults care and can be trusted to provide support.
- ✓ **Enact anti-racist and anti-bullying programs to foster inclusion and belonging.**

## What NOT to Do

- ✗ **Do not ignore signs or allow your fear or discomfort to stop you from taking action if you are concerned about a student's safety. Do not assume that someone else will respond.**
- ✗ **Do not leave a student alone and do not allow them to go home without meeting with a school mental health professional** and receiving an assessment if you are concerned they are at risk for suicide.
- ✗ **Do not remain silent about your concerns.** When someone asks a student if they are suicidal and does a risk assessment, it does not increase their suicide risk and may be a critical step in getting them much needed help.
- ✗ **Do not use a no-harm contract.** No-harm contracts do not prevent suicide and may take attention away from the risk.
- ✗ **Do not avoid discussing mental health.** Have direct and open conversations with all members of your school community. Normalize discussions about mental health, coping strategies, and ways to get help.
- ✗ **Do not allow discrimination and racism to pervade the school environment.**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from [https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA\\_Digital\\_Download/sma12-4669.pdf](https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/sma12-4669.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from <https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/healthcare-professionals>

If you are having thoughts of suicide, call 988 or 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).  
Additional resources are located at [SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources](https://speakingofsuicide.com/resources).

<https://studentbehaviorblog.org/>



Student Behavior Blog