



# SUICIDE PREVENTION

## WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW

*Worried that your student is at risk for suicide? This is a scary topic for anyone, but you don't have to face it alone. Here are some resources to guide you.*

### **Common Warning Signs:**

- Extreme moodiness or irritability
- Unusually withdrawn or isolated
- Talks excessively of death and dying
- Asks if others would miss them if they're gone
- Gives away possessions
- Says things like "I'm over it all"
- Makes comments about hurting or killing themselves

### **DO's**

- Try to approach the student in a calm and caring way
- Take the threat seriously
- Let the student know that there are people who care about them
- Use the student's same words when you are speaking to them
- Show a respectful willingness to listen and non-judgmental compassion for the student's experience
- Reassure them that there is help and support available
- Get in contact with your school's wellness team as soon as possible

### **DON'T's**

- Don't try to minimize problems or shame them into changing their mind
- Don't ignore the student
- Don't discuss about suicide being right or wrong
- Try not to be overly reactive – this could alienate the student
- Try not to respond with panic, shock, or an averted gaze
- Don't try to stop the behavior with threats or ultimatums
- Don't show excessive interest in the suicidal behavior
- Do not tell the student that you won't tell anyone if they open up



It's normal to feel overwhelmed when you are supporting a student in crisis. In those moments, here are some coping skills you can try:

- Take slow, deep breaths before speaking to the student
- Remind yourself that you are not alone: the wellness team at your school is there to support the student too!
- Practice self-care after connecting the student to the wellness team: go for a walk outside, get support from coworkers or friends and family, watch a funny video or tv show.

#### **Additional Resources:**

- FOR IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE: 911
- NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE (24/7): 1-888-273-TALK (8255)
- FOR WASHINGTON DC RESIDENTS
  - CHAMPS (24/7) 202-481-1440
  - DC DEPT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACCESS HOTLINE: 1-888-793-4357
- VISIT <https://www.sprc.org/about-suicide>