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• Unusually withdrawn or isolated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](https://www.sprc.org/about-suicide)