



NOVEMBER: SUICIDE AND SELF HARM

– What Caregivers Need to Know –

Suicide and self-harm: what families need to know

Self-harm includes any injury done on purpose to oneself; including cutting, burning, hitting, or scratching. This behavior can be a warning sign and a risk factor for suicide, or a sign of other underlying mental health distress. It is normal to feel scared and overwhelmed about discussing these topics with your children. Read on to understand more and learn how to start a conversation.

More about self-harm

Self-harm is most common among teenagers and young adults. During these years of life, emotional changes happen quickly, and social pressure increases, which can lead to elevated levels of stress and confusing emotions. Self-harm can be a harmful way that youth may try to cope with feelings of sadness and anger or relieve stress. It can also be an attempt to ask for help. Although someone who self-harms may not intend to seriously hurt or kill themselves, they are at risk of accidentally doing so and need support. If your child is struggling with self-harm or expresses feeling suicidal, talk to them about it, and plan together to reach out to your pediatrician or your school wellness team.

How do I start the conversation?

- **Stay calm:** Sometimes concern and worry can come out as anger. Call a friend or family member to process your feelings afterward, but stay focused on your child's feelings in the moment.
- **Do not be afraid of tough questions:** It is normal to feel scared of asking direct questions about self-harm and suicide. Take deep breaths and reassure your child that you love them and want to understand how they are feeling.
- **Seek help when needed:** If this conversation feels overwhelming, you are not alone. Reach out for support. You can talk to your child's pediatrician or school wellness team to learn more. If you need immediate help:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741
CHAMPS (mobile crisis support for DC youth)	(202) 481-1440
Maryland Statewide Crisis Hotline	1-800-422-0009
The Trevor Project (supporting LGBTQIA youth)	1-866-488-7386 Or text START to 678678