

January School Health Newsletter

Talking or learning more about suicide and how to prevent it can be a difficult conversation, but a very important one. The **school nurses** in each building are available to help families access mental health resources available in our community. Read on for more information about suicide, and also about a great event – **Youth Summit III** -- coming up in Newton early next month.

Suicide (i.e., taking one's own life) is a serious public health problem that affects a wide range of people. For youth between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death. It results in approximately 4,600 lives lost nationwide each year. The top three methods used in suicides of young people include firearm (45%), suffocation (40%), and poisoning (8%).

More young people survive suicide attempts than actually die. In Newton, 9 percent of high school students have seriously thought about suicide, according to data from the 2012 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Comparatively, 16 percent of students nationwide reported seriously considering suicide. 8 percent of high school students nationwide reported trying to take their own life as compared to 4 percent of Newton high school students reported attempting suicide.

While suicide can affect youth of all groups, boys are more likely than girls to die from suicide. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 age group, 81% of the deaths were males and 19% were females. Girls, however, are more likely to report attempting suicide than boys.

Several factors can put a young person at risk for suicide. However, having these **risk factors** does not mean that suicide will occur. Risk factors include:

- History of previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Stressful life event or loss
- Easy access to lethal methods
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others
- Incarceration

People who attempt suicide often display one or more of the following **warning signs**:

- Talking about wanting to kill themselves, or saying they wish they were dead
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as hoarding medicine or buying a gun
- Talking about a specific suicide plan
- Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped, desperate, or needing to escape from an intolerable situation
- Having the feeling of being a burden to others
- Feeling humiliated
- Having intense anxiety and/or panic attacks
- Losing interest in things, or losing the ability to experience pleasure
- Insomnia
- Becoming socially isolated and withdrawn from friends, family, and others

- Acting irritable or agitated
- Showing rage, or talking about seeking revenge for being victimized or rejected, whether or not the situations the person describes seem real

Many people who attempt suicide talk about their intention with someone else. If you know someone who needs help, there are many resources available. In Newton, **Riverside Emergency Services** can be reached at (800) 529-5077 and the **MSPP Interface** (617) 332-3666 x1411. The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** can be reached at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

And as always, 911 is available for emergencies.

Information adapted from www.cdc.gov/features/preventingsuicide and www.afsp.org/preventing-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs

Newton Youth Summit III

As a society, we generally do not communicate openly about the topic of mental health including suicide, depression, self-injury, addictions, stress and more. There is a stigma attached to these topics and we are left with a major public health problem cloaked in secrecy.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Please join us for Youth Summit III, an open and honest conversation.

Mayor Setti D. Warren and the Newton Youth Commission invite teens and adults to attend **Newton Youth Summit III** on **Wednesday February 5th** from **6-9pm** at **Brown Middle School**. The evening will feature Kevin Breel, a 20-year-old comedian and mental health activist. The focus of the summit will be youth and adult communication, difficult conversations and solutions from Youth Summits I and II.

Need More Info.?

visit: www.newtonma.gov/youth

call: 617-796-1426

or email: youthsummit@newtonma.gov

Information adapted from <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health/index.html>