

IS A YOUNG PERSON TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING?



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are common warning signs of mental health or substance use or misuse disorders among young people?

A: Some of the most common warning signs are:

- Lacking interest in favorite activities (“too tired to play”)
- Acting angry and hostile toward people and surroundings
- Fighting or arguing with others
- Having trouble sitting still or concentrating most days
- Running away from home
- Showing significant weight loss or weight gain
- Indicating a fear that “bad things will happen”
- Talking about death/suicide
- Having prolonged feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Giving away prized personal belongings
- Sudden drop in grades
- Changes in friends, especially with drug users
- Significant changes in personality
- Seems to worry constantly about personal safety or safety of family members
- Does not want to go to school
- Complains often of headaches, stomach aches and other sicknesses
- Having difficulty sleeping or nightmares

However, it is important to remember that only a licensed medical doctor or mental health professional can provide an assessment and evaluation to determine whether or not someone has a mental health condition or substance abuse disorder.

Q: What other conditions and disorders are associated with substance use or misuse among young people?

A: Conduct disorder (persistent misbehavior) and depression are the two most often reported disorders among young people with substance misuse issues. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and eating disorders are also common. It is known as a “co-occurring disorder” when someone has both a mental health condition and a substance misuse disorder.

Q: Does the mental health condition cause the substance use disorder when a young person has both?

A: Co-occurring disorders can develop when a person with a mental health condition attempts to cope by taking drugs or alcohol; a behavior often referred to as “self-medicating.” It is also common for co-occurring disorders to develop in the opposite order, with alcohol or other drug use causing or exacerbating mental health conditions.

Q: What are some of the substances commonly used and abused by youth?

A: Some of the most common substances are:

- Tobacco and alcohol;
- Street and party drugs: Marijuana (pot, weed), cocaine, heroin, GHB (Gamma hydroxybutyrate), synthetic cannabinoids (Spice, K2), Ecstasy, methamphetamine, Cheese (a combination of heroin and cold medication) and LSD;
- Prescription drugs: Ketamine hydrochloride, hydrocodone, OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, Xanax, Rohypnol, and steroids;
- Over-the-counter: cough, cold, sleep, laxatives and diet medicines; and:
- Inhalants: paint thinners, gasoline, acetone, Freon, glues, correction fluids, felt-tip marker fluid, butane lighters and propane tanks, whipped cream aerosols or dispensers, spray paints, hair or deodorant sprays, canned air and fabric protector sprays.

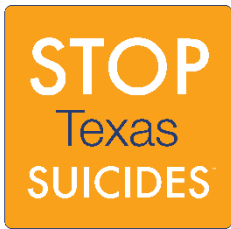
Texas Suicide Prevention Council

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS — CONTINUED

Q: What treatments are available for mental health conditions and substance use and misuse disorders?

A: Seeking treatment for substance use or mental health concerns can reduce a young person's risk for further problems, including suicide. There are a number of effective treatments for substance use disorders and mental health conditions. It is also helpful to work with a coordinated and integrated health care provider team that shares information.

Successful treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use and misuse are to treat both simultaneously and to develop an individualized treatment plan that can include:

- Integrated Treatment Design treats the mental health condition and substance use at the same time. Service providers work together to develop a treatment plan and to coordinate services, including counseling, case management, medications, social skills training and family intervention.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy looks at how a person's behavior affects how they feel. By teaching new skills and techniques, it gives a young person them more control over feelings and reactions.
- Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive, family-based treatment that uses family strengths to encourage positive social behavior and change substance use behaviors of a child at home, school and in the community.

WHEN A YOUNG PERSON MAY NEED HELP



The warning signs for mental health or substance use problems among young people listed above are also indicative of a higher risk for suicide. Additional suicide warning signs include:

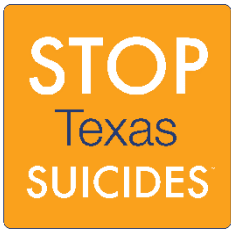
- Threatening or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to access firearms, medication or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- Feelings of hopelessness or withdrawing from social connections
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities

If you suspect that someone you know is thinking about suicide, the best way to approach the situation is to ASK.

ASK the question directly ("Have you thought about suicide?" "Do you want to kill yourself?" "Are you thinking about suicide?"), or indirectly ("Sometimes when people are sad as you are, they think about suicide. Have you ever thought about it?" "Do you ever want to go to bed and never wake up?").

Once you **ASK**, follow the steps on the next page.

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ASK

1. Find a private area to talk and seek to establish a relationship, if you don't have one already.
2. Comment on your observations non-judgmentally. Be curious about the perceived problem (how long have they thought about suicide, have there been previous attempts). Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal reactions.
3. **SEEK** to find out if they are at high risk of suicide and who and where they normally go for help. (Primary care or mental health provider, trusted friend or family member).
4. **KNOW** where to get help. If you feel that someone is at risk for suicide, refer to a mental health professional or one of the resources below.

If you feel that someone is at immediate risk of suicide **DO NOT leave the person alone**. Call 911, seek immediate help from a mental health provider, a mobile crisis outreach team, or the nearest hospital emergency room.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (call or chat):
 SuicidePreventionLifeline.org
 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
 Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741



Crisis Lines - Texas HHSC Helpline
 Dial 211 or call 1-877-541-7905
211texas.org

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)
www.samhsa.gov

NAMI Texas
www.NamiTexas.org

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

Texas Youth Hotline: 1-800-989-6884
 Text: 512-872-5777 / Chat:
www.dfps.state.tx.us/Youth_Hotline/

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org

Texas Suicide Prevention Council
TexasSuicidePrevention.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
afsp.org

The Trevor Project (LGBTQ Youth)
 Call: 1-866-488-7368
www.thetrevorproject.org

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
hhsc.texas.gov

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org

This factsheet is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat or manage any physical or mental health concern. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council, its contractors, or sponsoring organizations. Please seek medical or mental health advice from a mental health professional. If you or someone you know is in crisis or at risk of suicide, contact 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.