Recent statistics show that youth suicide is still a major problem in the United States. Suicide is currently the third leading cause of death for people 15-24 years old in the U.S. and the second leading cause of death for this age group in Texas. Over 4,000 youth and young adults aged 10-24 die by suicide every year across the country. Female youth attempt suicide more frequently than males, but males die from suicide at a rate about four times higher than females.

The 2017 Texas Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 17.8% of Texas high school students had seriously thought suicide in the previous year and 14.5% had made a suicide plan, and 12.3% had attempted suicide so severe it required medical attention.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** What are the common warning signs that a young person might be considering suicide?

**A:** Common warning signs include:

- Threatening or talking about wanting to hurt of kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, medication, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary to the person
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Increasing alcohol or drug use or misuse
- Withdrawing from friends, family and social situations
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger, or seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Dramatic mood changes
- Talking about feeling trapped—like there’s no way out
- Signs of anxiousness and agitation
- Not sleeping or sleeping all the time
- Expressing that there is no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

If one or more of these warning signs are new or if they have recently increased, risk of suicide may be greater. A young person acting differently, perhaps in connection to a painful event also increases the risk. The warning signs may be especially critical if the person has a history of or current problem with depression, alcohol, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or if he or she has made a suicide attempt in the past.

**Q:** Will bringing up the subject of suicide with a young person increase the likelihood that he or she will attempt suicide?

**A:** No. All collected evidence shows that bringing up the topic is an important way to prevent suicide. Introducing the topic and showing a willingness to discuss suicide allows the other person to feel heard.

**Q:** Is it easy for parents and caregivers to tell when a youth is displaying suicidal behavior?

**A:** Many parents and caregivers assume that it will be easy for them to tell when something is troubling their child or children. Unfortunately, research shows that this is often not the case. It is important for a parent or guardian to be able to identify warning signs. It also shows the importance of asking questions and being open to conversation. See Page 2 of this handout for more information on how to ask about suicide.

**Q:** Do youth who express suicidal thoughts or behaviors ever do so just to get attention?

**A:** Not every single youth who expresses suicidal thoughts or behaviors actually plans on attempting. However, it is important that these expressions are taken seriously every time they occur. Research indicates that suicide is often a process, not a random or isolated occurrence. Individuals who attempt suicide usually express their intention to do so and display one or more of the common warning signs prior to the event.
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.