



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR  
Suicide Prevention

MORE

THAN SAD

**Suicide Prevention**  
**Education** for Teachers and  
Other School Personnel

# Goals

- Understand the scope of youth suicide
- Identify the warning signs and risk factors of youth suicide
- Know how to refer at-risk students
- Get an overview of mental health treatments

# A Few Key Terms:

- **Suicidal ideation:** Thoughts of engaging in suicide-related behavior.
- **Suicide behaviors:** Behaviors related to suicide, including preparatory acts, as well as suicide attempts and death.
- **Nonsuicidal self-injury:** Self-injury with no intent to die.
- **Suicide attempt:** A nonfatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.
- **Suicide:** Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.

# Scope of the Problem (2014\*)

## U.S. population overall

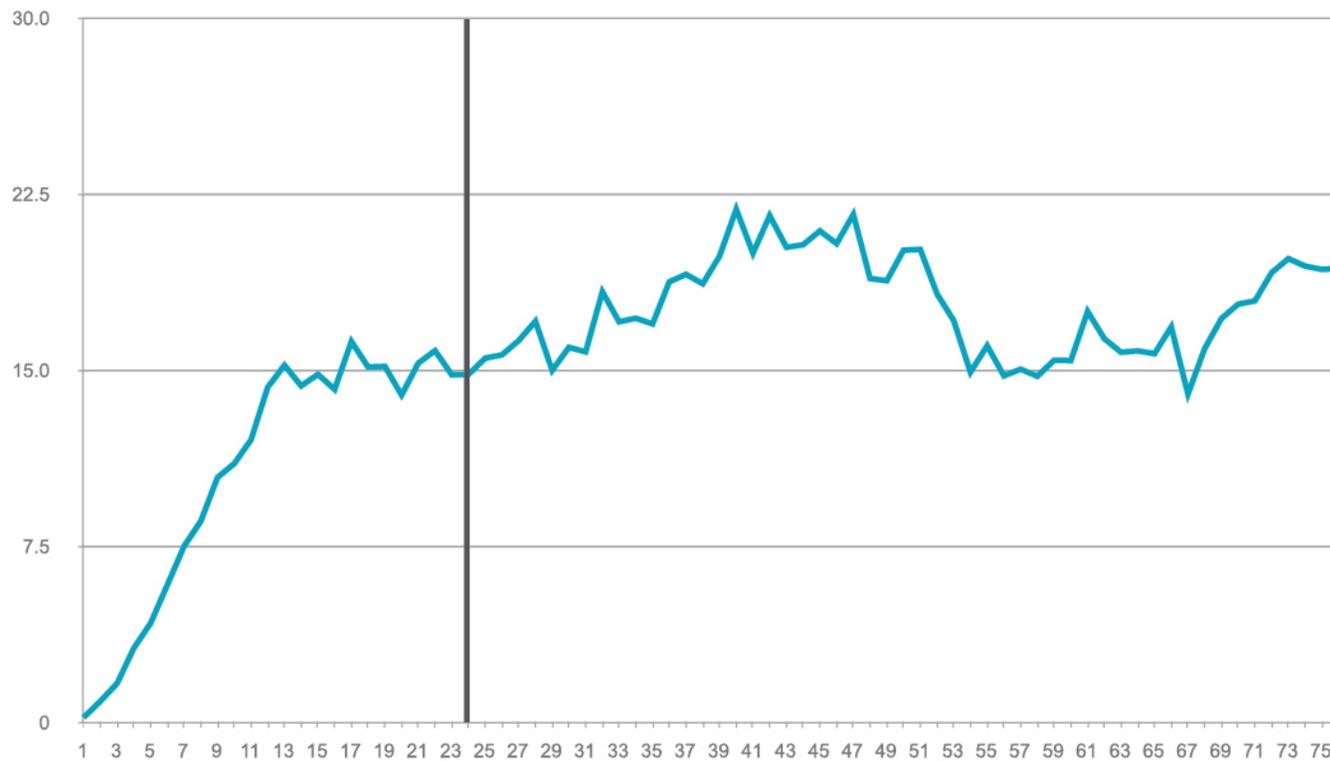
- 42,773 *reported* suicide deaths.
- 12.9 suicides per 100,000 population (age-adjusted).
- Suicide is 10th leading cause of death.

## Youth ages 10-24

- 5,504 *reported* suicides.
- 12.9% of total suicides in U.S.
- 8.5 suicides per 100,000 youth.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 (after unintentional injuries).

\*latest year for which suicide statistics are currently available

# U.S. Suicide Rates

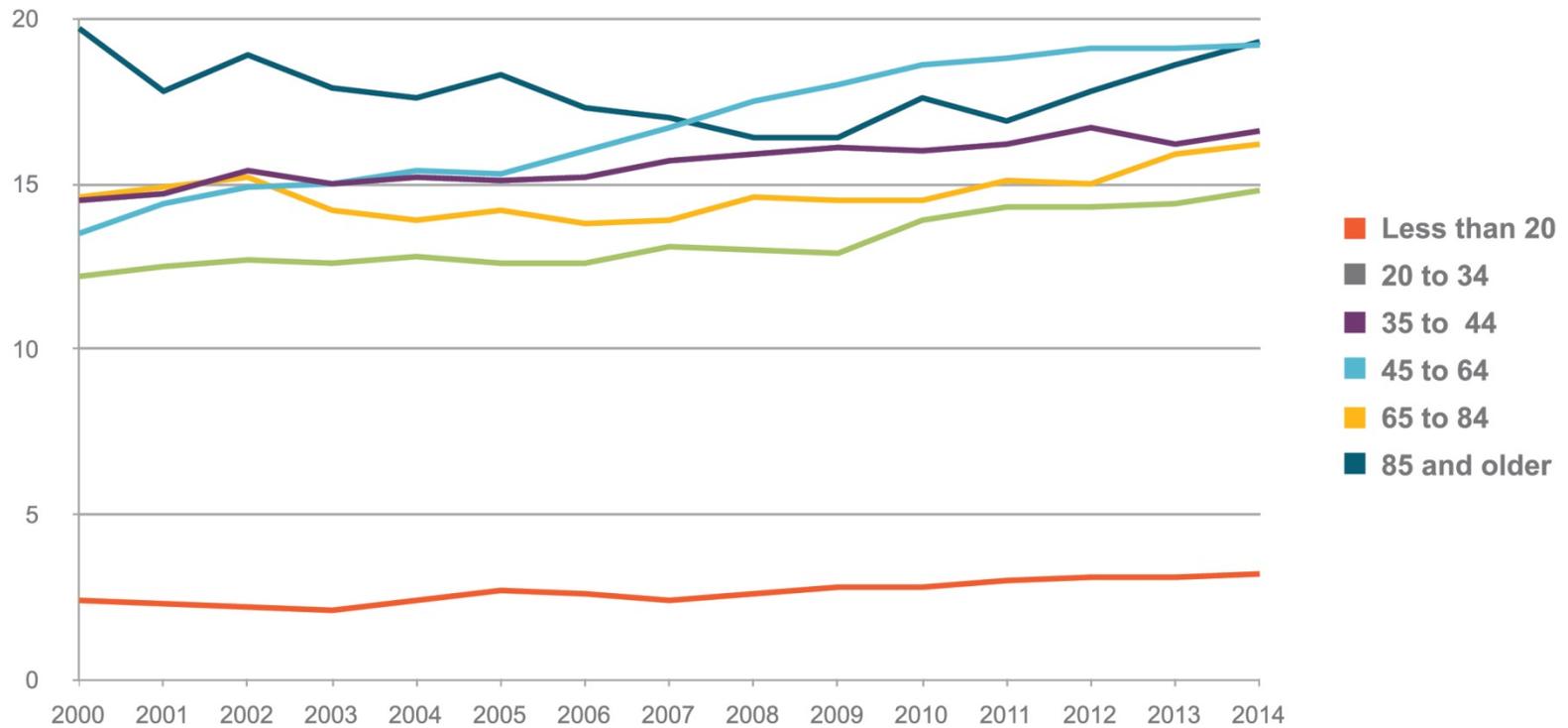


Rate per 100,000

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016

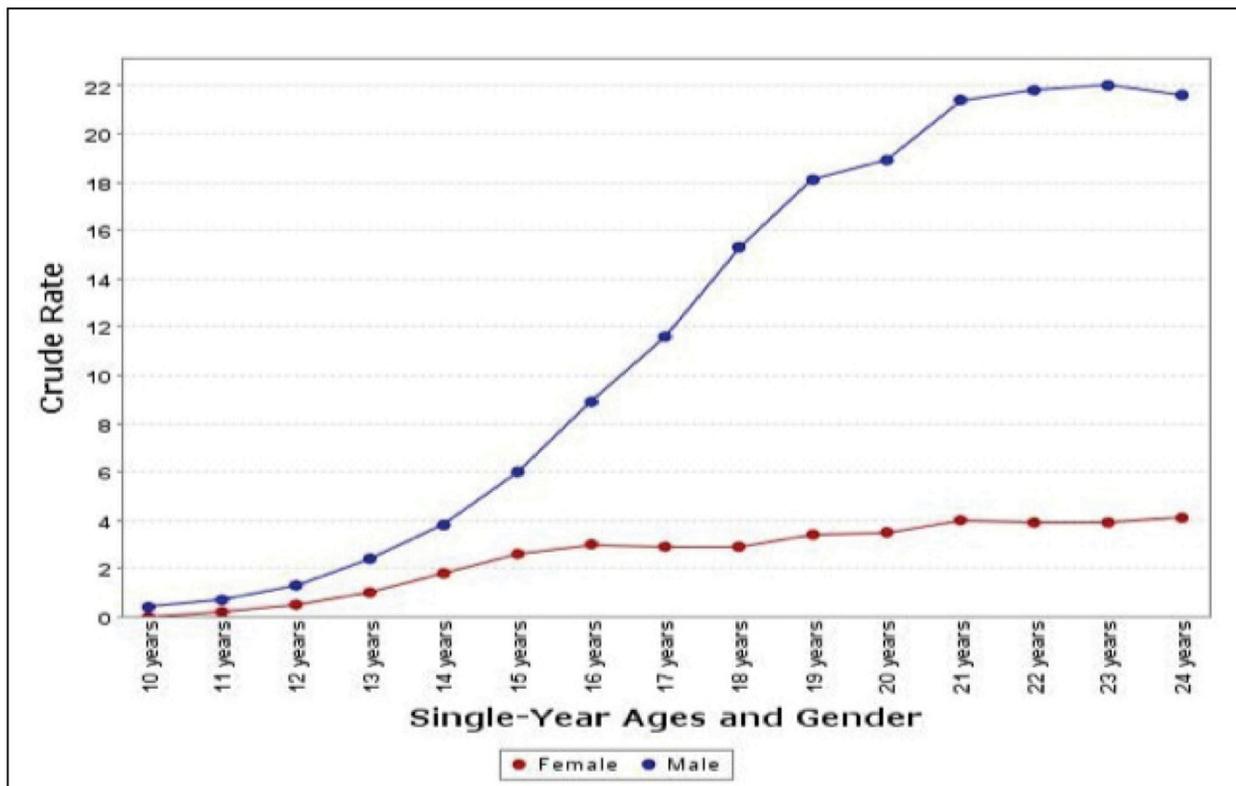
# Youth Rates Stay Steady

per 100,000 by Age Group



# U.S. Youth Suicide Rates

by Gender, Ages 10–24



Male youth die by suicide at a rate 4x higher than female youth in the U.S.

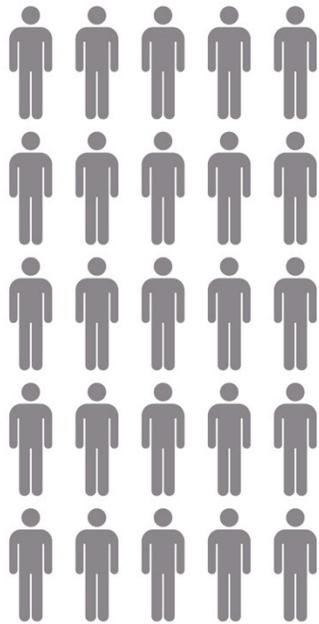
Source: CDC, 2014

# Youth Suicide Rates

by Race/Ethnicity (Ages 15-24)

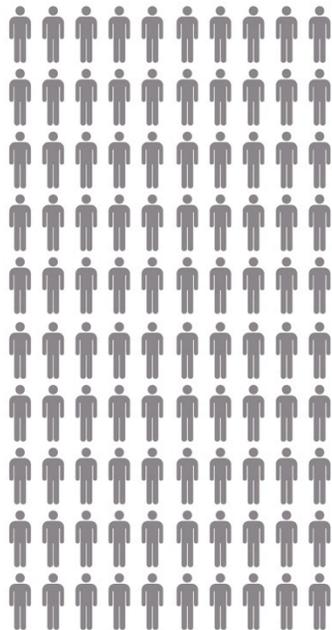
Ethnic Group	Suicide Rate per 100,000
American Indian/Alaskan Native	19.4
White	12.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.7
Black	7.1
Hispanic	6.8

# Suicide Attempts



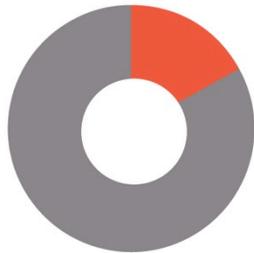
- For every suicide, it is estimated that there are 25 attempts.
- No complete count is kept of attempts because many go unreported or untreated.

# Youth Suicide Attempts

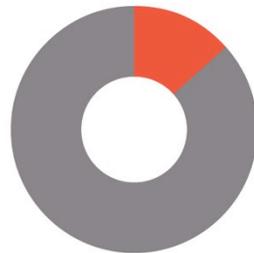


- For every suicide, 100-200 make an attempt.
- In 2013, over 180,000 youth ages 10-24 were hospitalized for self-inflicted injuries.

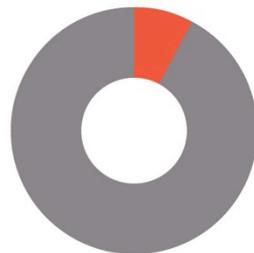
# National Youth Risk Behavior Survey



- **17%** reported having seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year.



- **13.6%** reported having made a plan for a suicide attempt in the previous year.



- **8%** of high school students who completed the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2013 reported having attempted suicide one or more times in the last year.

# At-Risk Populations

- The majority of all deaths by suicide are men.
- Women attempt suicide 3x more often than men.
- Attempts are 2-6x more frequent among youth who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, than among heterosexual youth.
- Based on a 2011 survey of high school students, 15.6% of Hispanic female students reported attempting suicide.

Suicidal Ideation **is** life threatening  
and must be taken seriously  
each time.

# Suicidal Ideation

- Suicidal ideation is often communicated before an attempt.
- Outside of that communication, ideation (and the youth's actual level of distress) is often well hidden.

# ***More Than Sad: Preventing Teen Suicide***

- Provides an overview of mental health conditions in teens.
- Identifies behaviors that suggest a student may be at risk for suicide.
- Shows what a teacher and other school personnel can do to help a student at risk.

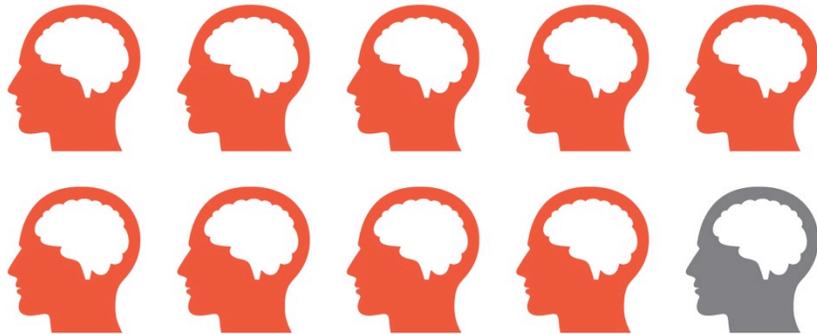
# Watch the Film

## MORE THAN SAD

Preventing Teen Suicide



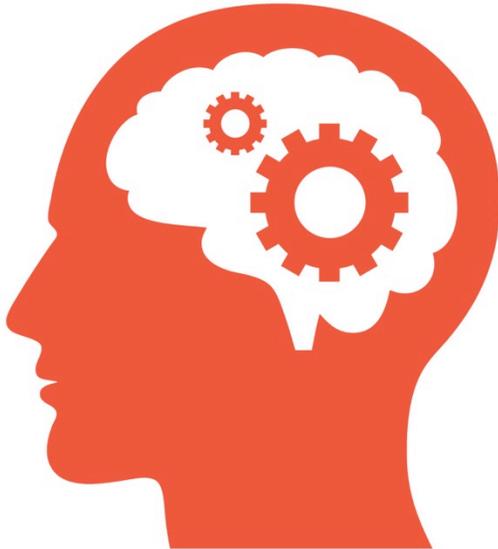
# Risk Factors for Teen Suicide



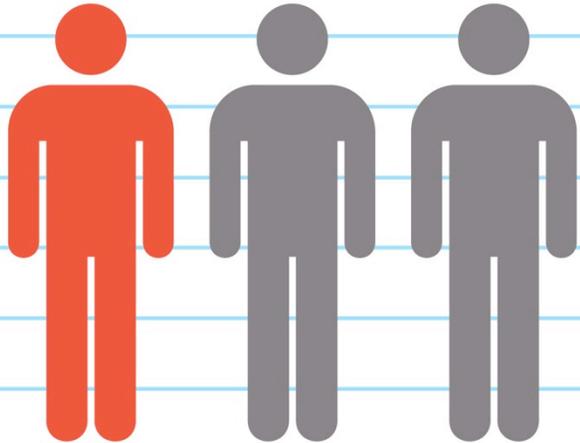
- A key risk factor for all age groups is an undiagnosed, untreated or ineffectively treated mental disorder.
- 9 out of 10 people who die by suicide have a treatable mental health condition at the time of their death.

# Common Mental Health Conditions

**Suicide risk in teens is most clearly linked to 7 mental conditions, which can co-occur together, increasing risk further:**



- Major Depressive Disorder
- Conduct Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Substance Use Disorders

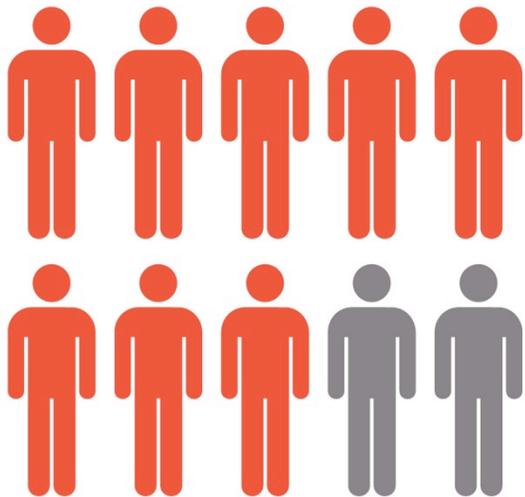


**2** out of **3** teens with depression don't get treatment.

# Mental Health Treatment

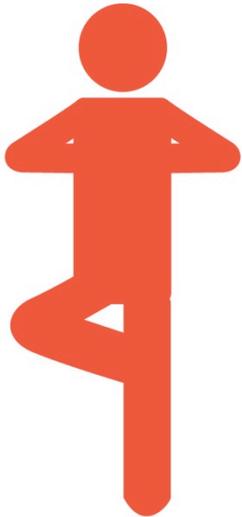
- Depressed teens can show improvement in 4-6 weeks with psychotherapy alone.
- Most others experience significant reduction of symptoms with antidepressant medication.
- Medication is essential in treating severe depression and other serious mental health conditions like bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

# Mental Health Treatment



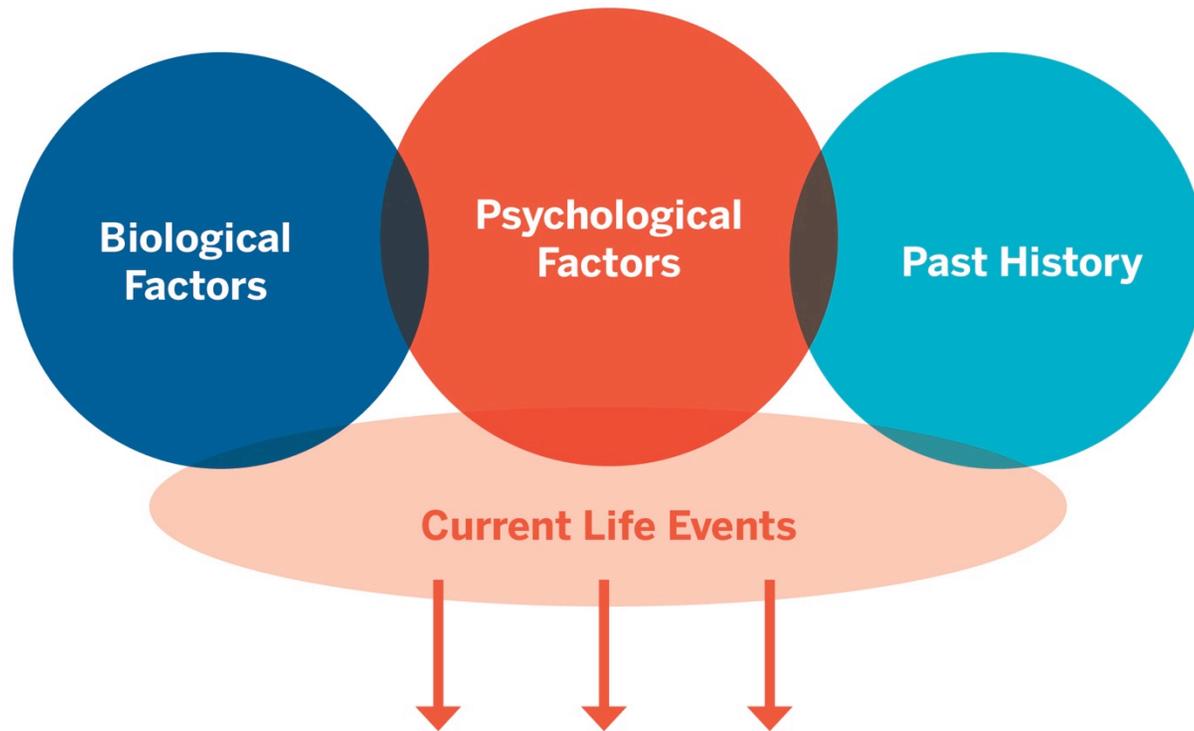
- Treatment is effective for 8 out of 10 people with depression.
- No single approach works for everyone; sometimes the person will need to try different treatments.
- Mental health conditions can recur, even if effectively treated at one point in time.

# Living a Healthy Lifestyle



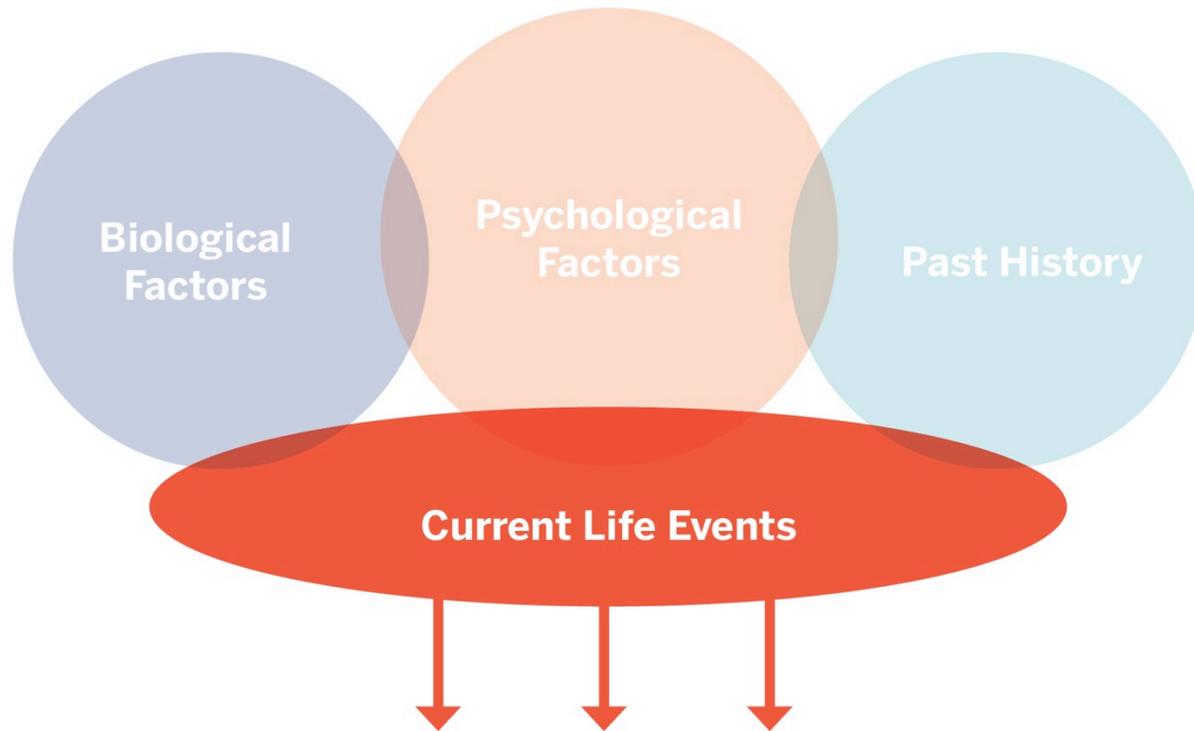
Exercise, yoga, breathing exercises, and changes in diet can improve mood and relieve anxiety and stress.

# Interacting Variables → Risk



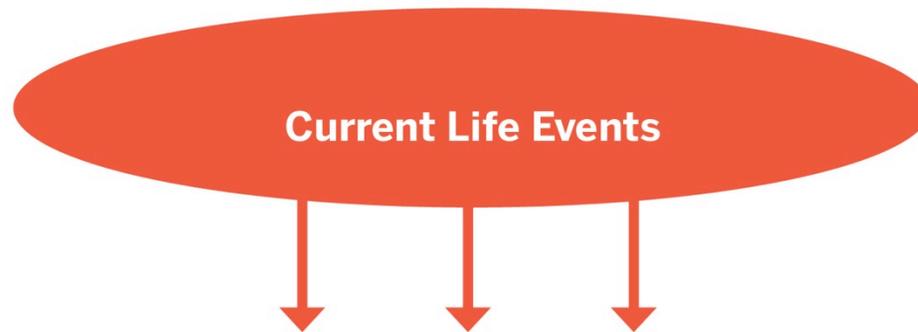
**Risk**

# Interacting Variables → Risk



**Risk**

# Interacting Variables → Risk



**Risk**

# An Environmental Factor: Bullying

Among middle-school students, suicidal ideation and behavior are:

- More common in **bully-victims** and physically aggressive bullies
- Less common in verbal bullies and victims who don't bully others

Among youth who were bullied during high school, suicidal ideation and behavior was later identified **only in those who had shown symptoms of depression at the time the bullying occurred.**

# Identifying At-Risk Students

**Mental health symptoms are often misinterpreted as**

- Normal adolescent mood swings
- Laziness
- Poor attitude
- Immaturity

# Suicide Warning Signs



Suicide **risk factors** endure over some period of time, while **warning signs** signal **imminent suicide risk**.

# Warning Signs: Talk



## If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

# Warning Signs: Behavior

**Be on the alert for these behavior changes:**



- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their life, such as searching online for materials or means
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Increasing aggressive behavior

# Warning Signs: Mood



**People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:**

- Depression
- Loss of interest
- Rage
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Anxiety

# ***More Than Sad***

- Provides a **model** for the effective recognition and treatment of depression in teens.
- Depicts **ideal** help-seeking behaviors among teens, and **ideal** responses among school personnel, physicians and mental health professionals.
- May contrast with what some families have encountered in seeking help for their teens.

# Watch the Film

## MORE THAN SAD

Teen Depression



# Barriers To Treatment For Teens

- Neither teens nor the adults who are close to them recognize the symptoms of their treatable illness.
- Fear of what treatment might involve.
- Belief that nothing can help.
- They don't see help-seeking as a sign of strength.
- They are embarrassed.
- Believe that adults won't understand.

# How You Can Help A Student At Risk

-  1. **Identify** students whose behavior suggests the presence of a mental health condition.
-  2. **Express concern.**
-  3. **Refer** the student to a mental health professional for evaluation and treatment.

# What Can Help Students Stay Safe?

- Receiving effective mental health care when needed.
- Fostering positive connections to family, peers, community, and social institutions that foster resilience.
- Creating safe and supportive school and community environments.
- Helping teens to cultivate problem-solving skills.
- Keeping open communication re: mental health concerns.

# How Schools Can Prevent Suicide



**1. Educate Students about Mental Health Conditions.**

*Present More Than Sad: Teen Depression* in the classroom with students grades 9-12.



**2. Educate Parents about Mental Health Conditions and Suicide Risk.**

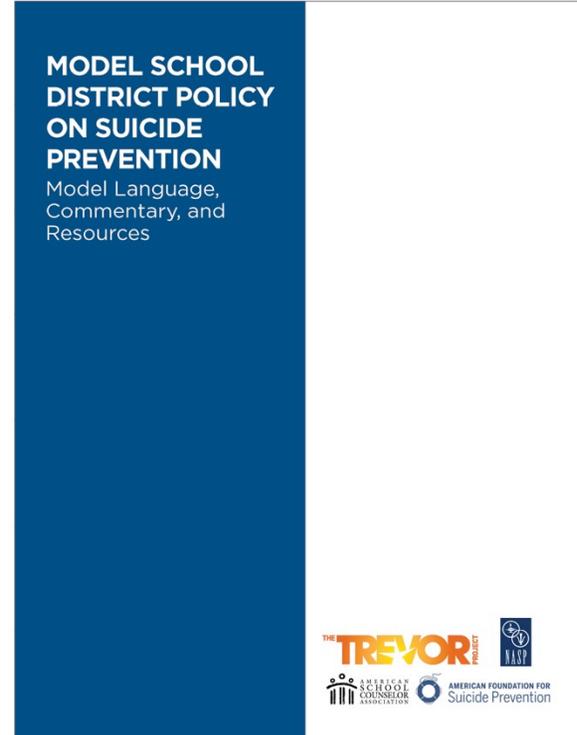
*Present More Than Sad: Parent Education* at a parent meeting.



**3. Create a Safe Place for Youth Seeking Help for Themselves or Their Friends.**

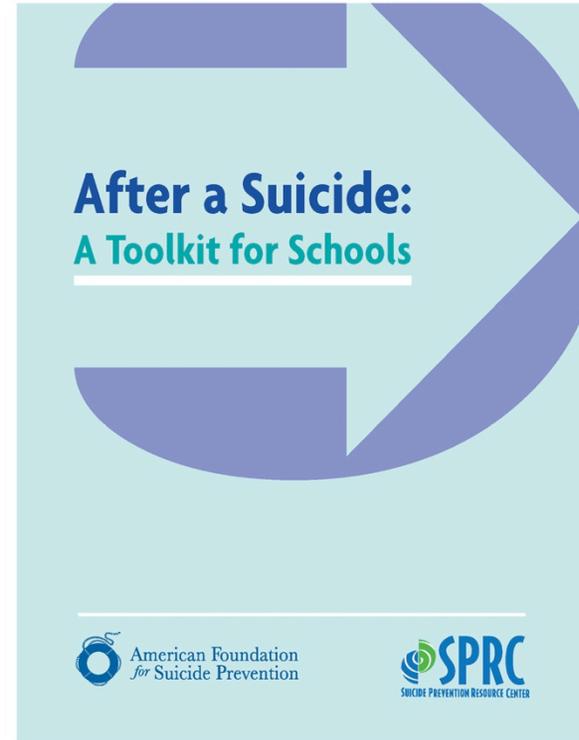
# Model School District Policy On Suicide Prevention

Recommended language for school district policies that address suicide prevention, risk assessment, and how to respond to suicidal behavior in youth.



# After A Suicide: A Toolkit For Schools

A guide that shows what a school should do in the aftermath of a suicide to help students, faculty, and staff heal and to decrease the risk of contagion.



# Signs Matter: Early Detection

- An online school-based training program (similar to a webinar)
- Suitable for K-12 educators
- Meets the two-hour requirement for teacher training that is mandated in many states
- Contains student-acted vignettes, expert analysis and commentary
- Requires successful completion of a post-test to measure knowledge
- For more information about how to purchase this program, visit [www.afsp.org/signsmatter](http://www.afsp.org/signsmatter)



**SIGNS MATTER: EARLY DETECTION**  
Online Suicide Prevention Training for K-12 Educators

Educators play a critical role in the fight against suicide because they are in a unique position to notice changes in the mental health of their students and identify signs of suicide risk.

This evidence-based program will show educators how and when to express concern and refer students to counseling staff or administration. The training is clear, simple, and it can save lives.

**Training includes:**

- A close look at the most common mental health problems and how they typically present in a school setting
- Real-world scenarios in an elementary, middle and high school setting to help you better identify students in need of help
- An online assessment tool to ensure that all participants have gained an understanding of the material covered
- Resources for understanding a school's role in suicide prevention
- Review of legal requirements for schools to keep in mind

*Signs Matter: Early Detection* fulfills many state requirements for educators to have two hours of instruction on suicide prevention.

Purchase today at [www.legalonenj.org/signsmatter](http://www.legalonenj.org/signsmatter).

RUTGERS University Behavioral Health Care   LEGAL ONE the leader in school law training   AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR Suicide Prevention   afsp.org

# Accessing Help 24/7

1-800-273-TALK  
[crisischat.org](https://crisischat.org)





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**THANK YOU!**

**[morethansad.org](http://morethansad.org)**