

Every child is a National Asset

# TEEN SUICIDE PREVENTION

*INFOPACK FOR SCHOOLS*



basic education

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Key Definitions

**Suicide:** When a person intentionally takes their own life, they seek to end the pain experienced.

**Suicidal thoughts:** is the thought process of having ideas, or ruminations about the possibility of completing suicide.

**Suicide attempts:** An act of self-harm that is intended to result in death but does not. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.

## Why should we talk about suicide and depression?

- *Society must normalise talking about mental health.*
- *The unique problems young people face can lead to depression and suicide.*
- *9% of teen deaths are due to suicide.*
- *Suicide is the 4th leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.*

# Myths and Facts about Teenage Suicide

## Myths

**People who talk about suicide really won't do it**

**Talking about suicide makes people more likely to kill themselves do you have**

**People who attempt suicide are just trying to get attention**

**Most suicide attempts occur without warning signs**

## Facts

In many cases teens who have thoughts of suicide or who have died by suicide have been given some kind of warning sign through their behavior or something they have said.

Research shows that talking about suicide with a young person does not cause them to have thoughts of suicide or kill themselves but not talking about it can lead to thoughts of suicide turning into actions. Talking about suicide and depression creates an opportunity to discuss feelings and thoughts that might have otherwise would remain hidden.

All threats all mentions of suicide should be taken seriously and professional help is needed. Threatening suicide may be a call for help, but something must be wrong for someone to threaten suicide to get attention or help

Most teenagers who are suicidal or have died by suicide have given some sign either physical or verbal. It might not always be direct, so it is important to know how to identify the warning signs and seek help

# Risks and Warning signs

# Teenage Suicide Risk Factors

- Mental Health issues like Bipolar Disorder, Depression, and Anxiety disorders.
- Gender Based Violence and Abusive Relationships
- Physical Health conditions like chronic illness or terminal illness
- A recent trauma or life crisis like death of a loved one
- Previous suicide attempts and a family history of suicide or depression
- Bullying
- Family problems and issues
- Relationship problems

# How to recognize warning signs?

**Warning signs** are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future.

## **Warning Signs for Suicide that should not be avoided:**

- Depression.
- Talking or joking about suicide.
- Self-criticism e.g. “I can’t do anything right.”, “I’m hideous.”, etc.
- Preparing for death by giving away valuable or sentimental things and/or saying goodbye.
- Drastic personality changes.
- Not taking an interest in appearance or there’s a drop in personal hygiene.
- Excessive or increased alcohol or drug use
- Writing poems, essays, or painting/drawing images of death.
- Suddenly feeling better. This could mean that they may have decided to commit suicide, set a date for their suicide and they know that their pain will soon end.

# Responding to learners displaying suicide warning signs

## How can teachers and others support teams assist a learner who may be feeling or thinking of suicide?

1. Immediate and urgent referral for further intervention to the SBST, social workers, psychologists, counsellor.
2. Ensuring that all learners know how to report any form of emotional distress.
3. Ensuring that every classroom has a reporting mechanism that is easily accessible to learners, and it should be written in a child friendly language for easy use.

## How can parents or family members support a learner who may be thinking of suicide?

1. Respond with empathy and understanding
2. Manage their own feelings.
3. Get help right away by contacting your nearest clinic or using any of the National crisis lines.
4. Remove potentially lethal tools and substances that a teenager can lay hands on at the wrong time.
5. Ensure fire arms are locked away.



# Protective Factors and Helplines





# Raising Awareness: Protective Factors

**Protective factors** are personal or environmental characteristics that reduce the probability of suicide.

Protective factors can buffer the effects of risk factors. The capacity to cope positively with the effects of risk factors is called “resilience.”

Actions by school staff to enhance protective factors are an essential element of a suicide prevention effort.

Strengthening these factors also protects students from other risks, including violence, substance abuse, and academic failure.

## By the School

- ❖ Advocate for and create awareness on teen suicide.
- ❖ Create a psychosocially healthy school environment.
- ❖ Inspire a sense of connectedness to the school.
- ❖ A school that respects the culture and beliefs of all learners.

# Where to get help

## General intervention, counselling, and prevention

### ❖ Cipla

**24 Hour Line:** 0800 456 789

### ❖ Lifeline

**Call:** 0861 322 322

**WhatsApp:** 065 989 9238

### ❖ LoveLife

**Call:** 080 012 1900

**PLZ Call me:** 083 132 2322

### ❖ Tears Foundation

**Dial:** \*143\*7355#

## Child / ADHD Related

### ❖ ADHD Helpline: 0800 55 44 33

### ❖ Childline:

**Helpline:** 08000 55555

**Dial** 116

## Suicide

### ❖ Suicide Crisis Line: 0800 567 567

## Depression And Anxiety

### ❖ Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety

**Helpline:** 0800 708 090

### ❖ South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) :

**Call:** 0800 567 567

**WhatsApp:** 076 882 2775

## Trauma / Gender Based Violence

### ❖ Department of Social Development

### Gender Based Violence Helpline:

0800 150 150

**Please Call Me:** \*120\*7867#

**SMS:** 31531

## Substance Use

### ❖ Department of Social Development

### Substance Abuse Line 24hr

**helpline:** 0800 12 13 14

**SMS** 32312

### ❖ SANCA

**Call:** 0800 12 13 14

# Suggested Activities for Teenage Awareness

# Activities for Teenage Suicide Prevention Week (1/2)

1. Play a video on Teenage suicide in the staff room for teachers and discuss what the school can do (Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tj62GEvT\\_yU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tj62GEvT_yU)).
2. Play a video on Teenage suicide in each class and facilitate a discussion (Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TokWrCfq\\_Cc&t=10s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TokWrCfq_Cc&t=10s)).
3. Develop a suicide prevention plan for your school.
4. Run a workshop with learners on how to support each other to create emotional safe schools.
5. Invite local Social workers, Counsellors, Psychologists or Nurses to come give a talk on Mental Health and suicide to learners.
6. Develop Awareness Posters for classrooms.
7. Create an anonymous box where learners can drop their concern on the PSS issues (can be placed at a foyer visible marked and LSA and SBST can CHECK EVERY FRIDAYS FOR REFERRALS) which can be used to address common issues.

# Activities for Teenage Suicide Prevention Week (2/2)

## Who should get involved:

1. The School Principal
2. Educators
3. Non-academic support teams
4. RCLs
5. Peer Educators
6. Parents

# Attachments:

1. An awareness session facilitation guide.
2. Teacher leaflet.
3. Learner leaflet.

# References

1. South African Depression and Anxiety Group: Teen Suicide Prevention. [South African Depression and Anxiety Group \(sadag.org\)](http://South African Depression and Anxiety Group (sadag.org))

2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Preventing Suicide. A toolkit for High Schools. [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools \(samhsa.gov\)](http://Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools (samhsa.gov))