

Suicide Prevention and Awareness

What Parents and Caregivers
Need to Know

APS Parent Resource Center
Sept 26, 2023



988

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

SEPTEMBER
**SUICIDE
PREVENTION**
AWARENESS MONTH



National Statistics



Youth and young adults ages 10-24 years old account for 15% of all suicides (2021).



For youth ages 10-14, suicide is the second leading cause of death



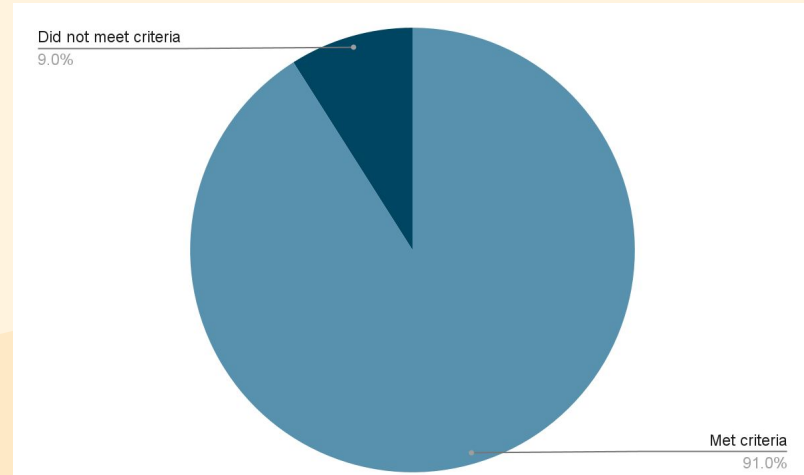
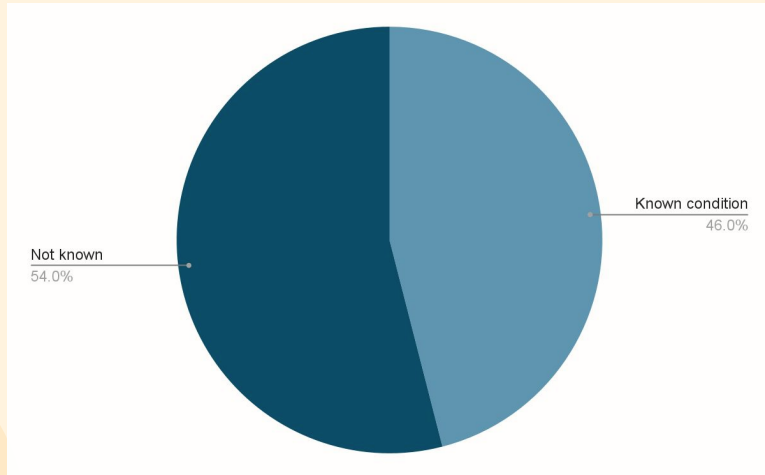
In 2022, 9% of high school students reported attempting suicide during the previous 12 months.



Depression and other untreated mental illnesses are commonly associated with suicide.

you are
♥ NOT ♥
alone

46% of those who died by suicide had a *known* mental health condition...but 91% met criteria



Presentation Overview

01

Risk Factors

Characteristics that increase the chance that a person may take their life

02

Protective Factors

Characteristics that help protect people from suicide

03

Warning Signs

Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal

04

Ways to Help

How to support a person who may be suicidal

01

Risk Factors

Certain characteristics are associated with increased suicide risk.

Risk Factors



Mental illness

Depression
Conduct Disorders
Substance abuse



Environmental Risks

Access to lethal means
(i.e. firearms)



Family stress

Illness
Divorce/Separation
Financial difficulties
etc.



Situational Crises

Traumatic death of a loved one
Physical or sexual abuse

02

Protective Factors

Lessen the potential of risk factors to lead to suicidal ideation and behaviors

Protective Factors



**Feeling connected
(family & friends)**



**Access to mental
health supports**



**Having coping
skills**



**Cultural or religious
beliefs that promote
healthy living**



**Limited access to
lethal means**



**Sense of purpose &
good self-esteem**



Feeling Connected

Do I belong?

- ★ We all need connection and community--even introverts!
- ★ Those who are less connected have worse mental health
- ★ It's about the sense of connection, not the numbers
- ★ All people, and especially youth, want to feel that they matter and have value within their community



Feeling Connected

Do I belong?

Challenge it when teens say:



"I hate people"



"I don't need friends"



"I don't want the drama"

Help teens connect with others through mutual interest. Look for natural opportunities.



Coping Skills

Start with Sleep



What do the experts say?

- 8-10 hours for teens
- Sleep hygiene: structure and routine!
- In the daytime, you need daylight; at night, you need dark
- Avoid caffeine
- Be active



Benefits: improvements in mood, anxiety, memory, immune system, cognitive performance, etc.



Coping Skills

Avoidant coping vs approach coping styles:

- ★ Avoidance coping feels good for a moment...
 - Prolonged distraction
 - Procrastination and denial
 - Resigned acceptance
 - Situational avoidance
 - Addictions

★ ...but is associated with poor mental health



Coping Skills

- ★ Acknowledge that motivation comes and goes
 - You're not a lazy person just because you're unmotivated right now
 - It's human nature to feel unmotivated sometimes
- ★ Remind youth of their resilience
 - "But you are tough enough to feel that way and still push through!"
 - "You're a survivor"
 - "Remember when you...."
- ★ Talk about avoidance and name it when you see it
- ★ Start small, with 100% buy-in
 - "What are you most motivated to do right now?"

Building Resilience



Teach and model healthy habits for mental health just as you would with physical health

Talk about mental health/feelings openly
Seek therapy if warranted



Check in with your child regularly, beyond just day-to-day tasks such as homework.

03

Warning Signs

Observable behaviors
that signal their suicidal
thinking.

Take all signs seriously!

Warning Signs



Suicidal threats

Direct or indirect statements



Prior Suicidal Behavior



Suicidal Notes or Plans



Making Final Arrangements

ie: Giving away prized possessions, visiting or calling people to say goodbye



Sudden changes in behavior, appearance or mood



Preoccupation with Death

Warning Signs (cont.)



Withdrawing from activities



Increased use of alcohol/drugs



Isolating from others



Sleeping too much or too little



Sudden Improvement or Relief

04

Ways to Help

- ★ Strategies for making connections and opening up important conversations are integral to suicide prevention.
- ★ Youth who feel suicidal may not seek help directly; However parents, peers and teachers can recognize warning signs and take immediate action.

Listening Non-Judgmentally

- Stop yourself from giving advice, sharing stories - it's not about you!
- Withhold your judgments; lower your emotions
- Validate feelings
 - “Ugh! That’s so hard”
 - “Wow, you’re going through a lot”
- Normalize conversations about mental health
- Always pair these courageous conversations with reassurance and messages of resiliency

THIS IS HOW YOU BUILD TRUST!!!!!!

Reassuring and Reframing

Reassuring

"If I were in your position, I would feel the same way"

"Feeling that way means you're human"

"I'm here for you"

"Should we try to find a solution/success story together?"

Reframing

"Is there another way of looking at this?"

"Is there a middle ground or gray area that I'm rejecting?"

"What evidence do I have that confirms my perspective? Is it really as bad as it seems?"

"Is this the end of the world?"

"This doesn't make sense...we must be missing something..."

If you notice warning signs



Remain calm



Ask youth directly if they are thinking about suicide



Focus on your concern for their wellbeing and avoid being accusatory



Listen and reassure them that there is help and they won't feel like this forever



Avoid judgment

If you notice warning signs (cont.)



Provide constant supervision. Do NOT leave the youth alone



Remove means for self-harm



GET HELP Seek help from school/community mental health resources as soon as possible



Call **911** if you or your child is in immediate danger



Call **988** the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for 24/7 mental health support if experiencing or witnessing a suicidal crisis or emotional distress

Asking youth directly about suicide

1

Assess

- Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Are you thinking about suicide?

YES

2

Ask the question

- Have you thought about how you would kill yourself?
- Have you decided when you would do it?
- Have you done anything to get the things you need to kill yourself?

3

Ask about planning

YES

4

Get help immediately

- **Call 911.** Tell the dispatcher that the person is at risk for suicide. If available, ask for a mental health crisis professional.
- Connect the person to appropriate professional help.

School & Community Support

APS Resources

Mental health professionals in every APS school trained to assess suicide risk if a student displays warning signs.









Community Resources

Arlington County and surrounding areas have short and longer term resources for youth in crisis

Local Resources

- ★ Emergency Mental Health: 703-228-5160
- ★ Arlington Children's Behavioral Health: 703-228-1560
- ★ Arlington Adult Behavioral Health: 703-228-5150
- ★ CR2: Emergency number 844-627-4747
- ★ Crisis Stabilization Services (REACH): 855-897-8278
- ★ Arlington Partnership For Children, Youth, and Families - Youth Mental Health & Wellness Resource Guide (other treatment options & searchable databases for providers)

National Resources

-  National Hotlines
-  National Suicide Prevent Lifeline: 988
-  Crisis Link Regional HotLine: 703-527-4077
-  National Hope Line: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
-  Trevor Project (Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ youth):
1-866-488-7386
-  Teen Line: 1-800-TLC-Teen (852-8336)

Questions?

How to contact us



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