

Youth Warning Signs

Action steps for school staff

When you are concerned that a student may be suicidal, **look for changes in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors**. This is of greatest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change, such as losing a friend or classmate to suicide.

Take any threat or talk about suicide seriously. Start by telling the student that you are concerned. **Don't be afraid to ask whether they are considering suicide or has a plan or method in mind**. Research shows that asking someone directly about suicide will not "put the idea in their head." Rather, the person in distress will often feel relieved that someone cares enough to talk about this issue with them. Below is a list of warning signs and steps to take for youth.

Significant warning signs Leaders in the suicide prevention field agree that the following warning signs indicate a young person may be at risk for suicide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking about or making plans for suicide• Expressing hopelessness about the future• Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress	What to do If you notice any of these signs in a student, take these recommended steps right away: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do not leave the student unsupervised. Make sure the student is in a secure environment with caring adults until they can be seen by the school mental health contact.2. Make sure the student is escorted to the school's mental health professional.3. Provide additional information to the mental health contact that will assist with the assessment of the student.
Other worrisome behavioral cues Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal from or change in social connections or situations• Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)• Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context• Recent increased agitation or irritability	What to do <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask if the student is OK or if they are having thoughts of suicide.2. Express your concern about what you are observing in their behavior.3. Listen attentively and nonjudgmentally.4. Reflect what the student shares and let the student know they have been heard.5. Tell the student that they are not alone.6. Let the student know there are treatments available that can help.7. Guide them to professional help, or to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988.