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Nationwide Children's Hospital
700 Children's Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43205

Center for Suicide Prevention and Research



SOS: Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program



When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Why is suicide prevention in schools important?

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for youth ages 10-19 in the United States.
- One in 6 teens has seriously contemplated suicide in the past year.
- Suicide affects people of all backgrounds. No one is immune.
- Suicide prevention programs are an important part of student safety.
- A single death by suicide will profoundly impact a school and elevate the risk of additional suicides if not managed sensitively.

What is the Signs of Suicide® (SOS) Prevention Program?

SOS is a nationally recognized suicide prevention program offered by The Center for Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR) at Nationwide Children's Hospital that:

- **Decreases** suicide attempts by students
- **Increases** the ability of participants to identify signs and symptoms of depression and to respond in a way that keeps students safe
- **Encourages** students to seek help for themselves or a friend

The SOS program teaches students, school staff and parents that suicide is preventable by promoting the ACT® message. When anyone notices warning signs of depression or suicide they should take the following actions:

- Acknowledge there is a serious concern
- Care: Show the person you Care
- Tell a trusted adult

What is the goal of SOS?

The goal is to reduce youth suicides by teaching students and staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide and depression in themselves and others and to follow the ACT® message. The SOS program encourages conversation around mental health issues, including depression and suicide, among school staff, families and students.

What makes SOS unique?

SOS is the only school-based suicide prevention program listed on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices. In randomized controlled studies, the SOS program showed a decrease of 40-64 percent in self-reported suicide attempts by students. Schools that have implemented SOS report they feel safer and more prepared to manage suicidal behavior of students.

SOS incorporates two key suicide prevention strategies:

- An educational curriculum for students and adults that raises awareness of suicide and its related issues
- A brief screening for depression and suicidal behavior followed by a risk assessment for those students who need immediate help

How is SOS implemented into schools?

CSPR staff will guide you through each step of the SOS roll-out and help address any concerns your staff might have.

CSPR staff are licensed mental health clinicians trained in suicide risk assessment and certified by Screening for Mental Health to train schools in providing SOS. They will help you plan and carry out all elements of SOS so you can be confident you are keeping your students as safe as possible.

The student portion of the SOS program is easily implemented by school personnel in classrooms across two regular class periods. General suicide prevention training of all school staff takes about 60-90 minutes and can be done in large or small group formats. CSPR staff also provide a 90-minute training for school personnel involved in classroom presentations and, as needed, a 90-minute training for those who support student screening and follow-up. The caregiver/community education portion lasts about 60 minutes.

What are the program components?

- **Training:** Suicide prevention training is provided for all school staff to maximize the number of adults who are capable of responding to students displaying warning signs of suicide. Additional online training is available.
- **Peer-to-Peer Middle or High School Student Program:** DVDs, PowerPoints, discussion guides, newsletters and supplementary materials are provided.
- **Screening:** A brief screening tool is used to identify at-risk students. A positive screen will lead to follow-up with qualified school staff and, where necessary, further evaluation by a mental health professional.
- **Consultation:** Ongoing support is available to schools regarding implementation, risk assessment and consultation about policies related to suicide prevention and crisis response.
- **Caregiver/Community Education:** The CSPR offers parents and guardians an opportunity to learn about depression and suicide, what warning signs to look for in children and how to respond when concerned.

The SOS program is offered at no cost for most schools in central and southeastern Ohio, depending on county.

For more information, please contact the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research at SuicidePrevention@NationwideChildrens.org or (614) 355-0850.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting "START" to 741-741.