

# **Suicide in Children**

## **Risk Factors, Warning Signs and Actions to Take**

### **Risk Factors**

- Child's parents are getting divorced.
- The child and his/her parents have been fighting or the parents have been yelling at child.
- Loss (includes death in the family, death of a friend, loss of a close relationship with someone, loss of an important or cherished item like a toy or keepsake)
- Mental Illness (including depression, anxiety, mood disorders, ADHD or impulsivity, etc.)
- Bullying (physical, verbal, emotional, cyber bullying).

### **Warning Signs**

#### **Verbal Clues**

Saying things like:

- "I shouldn't be here."
- "I'm going to run away."
- "I wish I were dead."
- "I'm going to kill myself."
- "I wish I could disappear forever."
- "If a person did this or that . . . would he/she die?"
- "The voices tell me to kill myself."
- "Maybe if I died, people would love me more."
- "I want to see what it feels like to die."
- "My parent's won't even miss me."
- "I'd be better off dead."
- "I can't live with this."
- "I'm going to kill myself."

#### **Behavioral Clues**

Doing things like:

- Talking or joking about suicide.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Preoccupation with death/violence; TV, movies, drawings, books, at play, music.
- High-risk behavior such as jumping from high places, running into traffic, self-injurious behaviors (cutting, burning).
- Having several accidents resulting in injury; "close calls" or "brushes with death."
- Obsession with guns and knives.
- Previous suicidal thoughts or attempts.

## **Actions to Take**

### **What do I do if my child shows suicidal behaviors?**

#### **Ask:**

- “What’s wrong?”
- “How can I help?”
- “Are you thinking of killing/hurting yourself?”
- “I’m sorry you’re feeling so bad.”
- “We’re going to get through this together.”
- “Let’s keep you safe.”

#### **Take Action:**

- Take them seriously
- Find someone they can talk to about it
- Make sure they always have someone they can talk to. Make a list of 3-5 names of people they can talk to.
- Help them identify coping skills they can use when they’re feeling sad, mad, depressed, etc.
- Make sure the home is safe. Remove pills, guns, ammunition, knives, rope, etc.
- Don’t leave them alone
- Take them to the emergency room or call 911 if they are actively suicidal

#### **Don’t Say:**

- “That’s crazy!”
- “Don’t be such a drama queen.”
- “You’re making too much of it.”
- “We don’t talk about that here.”
- “That boy/girl isn’t worth killing yourself over.”
- “That’s not going to solve anything.”
- “You’re just trying to get attention.”
- “You’re not going to kill yourself.”

#### **Resources:**

- Talk to a doctor, therapist, school counselor, ecclesiastical leader
- Wasatch Mental Health 24 hr. crisis line: 801-373-7393
- 1-800-273-TALK
- [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- [www.hope4utah.com](http://www.hope4utah.com)
- 24/7 Crisis Text Line: 741741 (140 characters or less)