



## Suicide Awareness: Knowing the Warning Signs and How to Get Help Can Save Lives

(COLUMBUS – March 25, 2019) In light of the recent tragic deaths of two students who survived the Parkland, Fla. massacre and the father of a slain Sandy Hook student, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is urging all Ohioans to learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide, and to be present for those in crisis to help prevent suicides.

More than 40,000 people die by suicide each year in the United States; it is the 10th leading cause of death overall. In Ohio, suicide remains the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 10-24.

“Suicide is a major public health concern. It is complicated and tragic, but it is preventable,” said Mark Hurst, M.D., OhioMHAS assistant director of clinical services. “Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.”

Suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk. Suicidal behavior is complex and there is no single cause. In fact, many different factors contribute to someone making a suicide attempt. But people most at risk tend to share certain characteristics.

The most common risk factors for suicide are:

- Depression, other mental disorders, or substance abuse disorder
- History of trauma or recent traumatic event
- Certain medical conditions
- Chronic pain
- A prior suicide attempt
- Family history of a mental disorder or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Having guns or other firearms in the home
- Having recently been released from prison or jail
- Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as that of family members, peers, or celebrities

Many people have some of these risk factors but do not attempt suicide. It is important to note that suicide is not a normal response to stress. “Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress, not a harmless bid for attention, and should not be ignored,” said Dr. Hurst. “Often, family and friends are the first to recognize the warning signs of suicide and can be the first step toward helping an at-risk individual find treatment with someone who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions. “



## Suicide Prevention, cont.

The behaviors listed below may be signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- Making a plan or looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun
- Talking about great guilt or shame
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions
- Feeling unbearable pain (emotional pain or physical pain)
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Using alcohol or drugs more often
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Changing eating and/or sleeping habits
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast
- Talking or thinking about death often
- Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
- Giving away important possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Putting affairs in order, making a will

If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently. One resource is the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#), **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**. The Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The deaf and hard of hearing can contact the Lifeline via TTY at 1-800-799-4889.

The State of Ohio also maintains a confidential Crisis Text Line. To connect with a trained counselor any time of day, text the keyword **4HOPE to 741 741**.

For more tools and resources, visit <http://mha.ohio.gov/suicideprevention> and <https://bepresentohio.org/>. The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network also has valuable information: <https://www.nctsn.org/>.

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