

# Youth Suicide Prevention: What Every Parent Should Know

Provided by West County Psychological Associates, St. Louis MO ~ 314.275.8599 ~ [www.wcpastl.com](http://www.wcpastl.com)

**Youth Suicide is Increasing** Suicide among youth continues to increase every year and is now the **second** leading cause of death in individuals of middle school, high school, and college age, exceeded only by accidents. Suicide is responsible for more deaths of 10-24 year olds each year in the U.S. than all natural causes *combined*.

**Which youth complete suicide?** Males complete suicide 3-4 times more often than females, although females attempt suicide 2-3 more as often as males. These differences are due primarily to the lethality of the method used. Males are more likely to choose more lethal methods, including firearms and hanging.

**Youth Suicide is Often Impulsive** Approximately 50% of adolescent suicide is believed to be impulsive, after a triggering situation, such as a break-up, bullying, or a family crisis. In these situations, a youth's first action toward suicide occurs less than ten minutes after their first thought of suicide. In this impulsive moment, whether the youth has access to a highly lethal method of suicide is *the* determining factor for life or death. This is why it's so important to restrict youth's unsupervised access to loaded firearms at all times.

## RISK FACTORS

- Unsupervised access to loaded firearms
- Previous suicide attempts
- Self-harming behaviors, such as cutting
- Mental health problems, such as depression
- Alcohol or drug use
- Physical or sexual abuse or other trauma
- Serious family stress or conflict
- Knowing a person who died by suicide
- Peer conflict, rejection or bullying

## WARNING SIGNS

80% of youth who die by suicide tell someone about their plans, directly or indirectly, within the weeks prior to their death. So when a young person displays warning signs, we should never assume that they "just want attention."

- Threatening suicide in person or online
- Focusing on suicidal themes in their writing, in their artwork, or in the media they watch/listen to
- Writing a suicide note, plan, will, or letter of goodbye
- Making suicidal statements or "jokes"
- Giving away prized personal possessions

## *If You Know or Suspect that Your Child is Considering Suicide:*

- Increase supervision for your child until they can be assessed by a professional
- Immediately make an appointment with your child's therapist or pediatrician or go to the ER
- Communicate important information with the school, so they can help keep your child safe
  - Follow through with treatment recommendations from your doctor and therapist.

\* If your child comes to you and says they are concerned about a suicidal friend, do not hesitate. Notify the other child's parent, the school, law enforcement or a suicide hotline right away. You might save that child's life!

## RESOURCES FOR HELP



**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255**  
**National Crisis Text Line: 741741**

In the St. Louis area:

Behavioral Health Response (BHR) 314.469.6644 or 800.811.4760  
*24/7/365 help in a mental health crisis*

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*Counseling services for children, teens, adults, families, and seniors*