

The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) is committed to promoting healthy behaviors that serve as the foundation for healthier individuals, families and communities throughout the City of Philadelphia. It's extremely important that adults regularly check in with the children, adolescents and young adults in their lives and pay attention to differences in what youth may say, what they may do and how they may feel. This document is intended to help adults recognize the signs and symptoms of suicidal behavior in youth and offer support for those who may be at risk.

The Warning Signs

Most youth at risk for attempting suicide exhibit behaviors that may signal suicidal thoughts.

Warning signs include:

- Changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts and/or feelings
- Direct and/or indirect statements, i.e. *"I'm going to kill myself."* or *"I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up."*
- Notes expressing suicidal thoughts, including online postings
- Prior suicidal behavior
- Making final arrangements, i.e. giving away prized possessions, writing a will
- Developing an obsession with death

What Can You Do?

If your child or another child you may know is exhibiting any of the behaviors above, you should:

- **Have the conversation:** Ask directly if he or she is thinking about suicide
- **Get help:** Never agree to keep a youth's suicidal thoughts a secret. Immediately seek help from school or mental health resources provided by DBHIDS. School staff should bring the youth to a school-employed mental health professional or administrator
- **Supervise:** Make sure youth are never left alone and remove any means for self-harm
- **Listen:** Allow them to talk and express their feelings
- **Get focused:** Focus your concern on their well-being and avoid criticizing their feelings or actions

Resources

DBHIDS and its provider network offer a wide-variety of services and programming to increase behavioral health literacy and provide support for those who may be at risk. These include:

- Our **Health Promotion unit via HealthyMindsPhilly.org** provides mental health screenings that parents/guardians can take on behalf of their children, a Wellness Corner, resource pages and more. For additional information, call 215-685-3755.
- Free **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** trainings to help people understand the signs and symptoms of mental disorders and learn how to support someone struggling with a mental health challenge. To learn more about MHFA, please email mhfa_philly@phmcc.org.
- Community support from **Network of Neighbors**, which consists of more than 100 volunteers trained to respond to incidents of trauma and violence in their own neighborhoods. They help those impacted receive support from familiar faces they are comfortable with. To learn more, email networkofneighbors@phila.gov.
- Our **Acute Services Unit** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide quick and effective behavioral health crisis intervention, including Mobile Crisis Teams, and Crisis Response Centers. Information is available by calling the Suicide/Crisis Intervention Call Center at 215-686-4420 or the Mental Health Delegate Crisis Line at 215-685-6440.