

understanding suicide

WHAT IS IT?

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadian youth, surpassed only by accidental deaths.
- In 2005, Statistics Canada reported:
 - 43 suicides (18 males and 25 females) for the 10-14 year old age range
 - 213 suicides (147 males and 66 females) for the 15-19 year old age range
- Young women are twice as likely as young men to actually attempt suicide however, young men are three times as likely as women to die as a result of suicide
- Over 85% of people who kill themselves have a pre-existing psychiatric disorder. The best treatment of suicidal behaviour is to treat the underlying psychiatric disorder. Also consider that for some individuals, there may be more than one psychiatric disorder present (co-morbidity).

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

The following represent warning signals that may indicate that someone is at risk of suicide:

Verbal or non-verbal communication:

- Previous suicidal gestures or attempts
- Direct verbal or written suicidal threats
- Passive statements revealing a desire to die (“life is meaningless”, “there is no point in living anymore”, “things would be better if I was not here anymore”, etc.)
- Preoccupation with death (e.g. through artwork)
- Self-harming behaviour
- Planning for death, making final arrangements, giving away prized possessions
- Sudden cheerfulness after prolonged depression may be a manifestation of relief because a decision has been made
- In some who die by suicide there are no signs or symptoms
- Immediate risk can come and go quickly although many of the underlying problems (e.g. mental health concerns) can be more chronic
- Substance use can increase the risk due to increased impulsivity and decreased inhibition of risk behaviour

Behavioural indicators:

- Loss of interest in former activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dramatic shift in quality of school work/ academic performance
- Feelings of sadness, emptiness and hopelessness
- Sleep disturbances
- Change in appetite and energy level
- Strong and overt expressions of anger and rage
- Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Promiscuous behaviour
- Uncharacteristic delinquent, thrill-seeking behaviour

WHAT NOW?

There are different resources available in the community to support youth who are at risk for suicide:

Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario & Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre – Centralized Mental Health Intake Office:

Intake services for mental health assessment & treatment, (referrals need to be initiated by the family physician or pediatrician), 1-866-737-2496 | www.cheo.on.ca

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region:

confidential emotional & mental health support, crisis intervention, information referral and education services, 613.238.3311 | www.dcottawa.on.ca

Kids Help Phone:

24 hour anonymous telephone counseling, referral and internet service for children & youth, 1.800.668.6868 | www.kidshelpphone.ca

Mental Health Crisis Line:

crisis intervention services for youth 16 and older, 613.722.6914 outside Ottawa, 1.866.996.0991 | www.crisisline.ca

Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa:

support available with a counselor who specializes in working with youth and their families, 613.562.3004 or after hours 613.260.2360 | 1.877.377.7775 | www.yso.on.ca

**If you are concerned about a youth’s immediate safety call 9-1-1 or, if you can safely do so, take them to the closest hospital’s emergency department*

For further information please visit www.ementalhealth.ca.



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