

SCREENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Prevention through Education

The SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program is the only youth suicide prevention program that has demonstrated an improvement in students' knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, as well as a reduction in actual suicide attempts. Listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, the SOS Program has shown a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64% in randomized control studies (Aseltine et al., 2007 & Schilling et al., 2016).

SOS is unique among school-based suicide prevention programs as it incorporates two prominent suicide prevention strategies into a single program: an educational curriculum that raises awareness about suicide and depression, and a brief screening for depression.

The SOS Programs use a simple and easy-to-remember acronym, ACT® (Acknowledge, Care, and Tell), to teach students action steps to take if they encounter a situation that requires help from a trusted adult. SOS is offered for both middle and high school aged youth and can be implemented in one class period by trained Communities In Schools staff.

Communities In Schools' experience with Signs of Suicide

Our Communities In Schools staff have provided the Signs of Suicide programming to students at five schools in two school districts over the last two years. One of our districts has asked us to provide it to all of their secondary schools. We have seen it to be incredibly helpful at increasing discussions about depression and suicide among youth and in setting an atmosphere of care and concern about the mental health of all students.

Through our interactions with these youth, we have been able to identify the issues that our kids are struggling with that are causing them to feel depressed and suicidal. Despite what the media might purport, bullying is not the number one issue that is causing kids to want to end their life. The issues we have identified align with the issues that have been identified by Texas Child Fatality Review Teams who look at the reasons adolescents actually died by suicide. These issues and their frequency are:

61%	14%	12%	10%	10%	10%	5%	3%
Family conflict	Organic (diagnosed mental health issue)	Bullying	Family illness/death	Academic stress	Self-Image	Substance Abuse	Financial Stress

After the video presentation and brief assessment of students, we discuss and encourage students to talk to each other and to caring adults in their lives about their feelings. We will come back to do a 1 and 3-month follow-up with each identified student as needed. Students are very clear that they feel so much better after talking about the stresses and anxieties they faced, and their relief in having someone help them talk to their parents about what is going on with them.