

PORT TOWNSEND SCHOOL DISTRICT
WARNING SIGNS FOR POTENTIAL SUICIDE
Information for School Staff

Signs of Immediate Risk for Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Other warning signs indicating severe emotional distress, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change (i.e. talking about feeling trapped, statements like 'everyone would be better off without me', giving away important possessions, withdrawn or isolating self, displaying extreme mood swings, closure of significant friendships or relationships, ongoing sadness or depression).



**Steps for School Staff when Suspecting a Student
May be Suicidal**

- Stay with student to ensure safety
- Contact your school counselor or administrator
 - Reach out to the administrator or counselor at another school, if your own school administration is not available

Salish Coast 360-379-4535; Blue Heron 360-379-4540; PTHS 360-379-4520

- Call 911, if imminent risk.

Other Resources include:

Local Crisis Line 360-385-0321 or
Volunteers of America 1-888-910-0416.

**Significant Risk
Factors for Suicide**

- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Mood and anxiety disorders, e.g., depression, posttraumatic stress disorder
- Access to a means to kill oneself, i.e., lethal means
- Isolation or lack of a support system
- Extreme Perfectionism
- Member of vulnerable identity groups

Note: The teacher/staff may be encouraged to do a follow up phone call to the parent/guardian. The school administrator or counselor will provide you with further guidance on this step.

Other Warning Signs – especially if the behavior is new; has increased; and/or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change including a relationship break up:

- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others *“Everyone would be better off without me”*
- Giving away important possessions
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs (self-medicating the pain)
- Self-injury behaviors
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Loss of hygiene, tidiness, organization
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated *“I have to do this on my own”*
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Changes in eating/sleeping patterns, too little or too much
- Preoccupation with death, expression of a wish to be dead, saying goodbye
- Change in peer group, moving into “more troubled” peer group
- Closure of friendships, relationships *“You won’t be seeing me around anymore”*
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge *“You’ll regret it when I’m gone”*
- Sadness or signs of depression that continues for two weeks or more