

# Responding to Students with Suicidal Ideation: Information for Teachers and Staff

## What to Look For

**Verbal Signs:** Verbal expression of hopelessness, wanting to die, or being with a deceased person.

“I wish I were dead.”

“You’ll be sorry when I’m gone.”

“No one cares whether I live or die.”

\*\*\*Peers talking about another student.\*\*\*

### Physical and Behavioral Signs:

-Changes in physical appearance and/or personality.

-Fascination with death through poems, journal entries, e-mails, websites, music, movies, artwork and

**\*\*Writing and Graffiti on Binders\*\***

-Suicide notes- may find these in classrooms, locker rooms, or bathrooms.

-Giving away possessions.

-Self-Mutilation-\*\*\*\*Cuts on body ...usually on the arms\*\*\*\*

## What to Do

“It is the student’s perception of the events that is important, not the adult’s perception.” Brown (1987).

*Whether you perceive the student as “manipulating” or “trying to get attention” for his/her suicidal ideation, all reports need to be handled in a thorough and earnest manner.*

### 1) Listen and provide support:

-Do not be judgmental or minimize the student’s feelings.

-Do not make any promises or bargain with the student about keeping the suicidal ideation a secret.

-Do not appear shocked or upset with the student.

### 2) Provide close supervision of the student.

-Do not leave the suicidal student alone.

-Do not try to handle everything alone.

### 3) Have student escorted to the identified school personnel who has been trained in screening for suicidal ideation (Gatekeeper).

-Tell the Gatekeeper about any relevant information regarding the student (precipitating events and warning signs).

## What Will Happen Next

The Gatekeeper will screen for suicidal risk and direct the student to the appropriate intervention(s), such as: in-school counseling, counseling outside the school, speaking with the School Resource Officer, returning to class with support, releasing into parental/guardian care. **In all cases in which a student is at risk for harming him/herself, parents will be notified.** Feedback about the severity of the situation, as well as how you as a teacher can help, will be provided.