

# **SIGNS OF SUICIDE (SOS) MIDDLE SCHOOL AWARENESS PREVENTION PROGRAM: OVERVIEW**

SOS (Signs of Suicide) is a research based suicide prevention program geared for middle school students. The program has endorsements from many organizations including:

- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
- School Social Work Association of America (ASCA)
- National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

The main message of the program is to **ACT: Acknowledge, Care and Tell**

- **Acknowledge** that you are seeing signs of suicide in friends and that it is serious.
- **Care**-Let your friend know that you are worried about him or her, and that you are concerned that he or she needs help you cannot provide.
- **Tell** a responsible adult, wither with your friend or on his or her behalf.

The SOS curriculum correlates to the following *Essential Standards for Teachers* strands: (7.MEH.3.2)

- Protecting Self/Others
- Relationships
- Substance Abuse
- Social Wellness
- Seeking Out Help from Appropriate Adults

The SOS Program has the following goals and objectives:

- Student Awareness and Education:
  - Help teens understand that depression is treatable, that suicide is preventable and that suicide often occurs as a result of untreated depression.
  - Teach students how to assess whether or not they may be suffering from depression
  - Provide students with an action plan to respond to their own and/or their peers' ideation, gestures or attempts to harm themselves.
  - Provide students with written information including available resources.
- Screening for Depression
  - Screen students for depression using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC) and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
  - Interview students for suicidality by school clinical support staff based on self/student referral, responding to need on the response card.
- Follow-Up Services:
  - Notify parents of students interviewed for depression and/or suicidality.
  - Recommend appropriate follow-up services depending on results of interview that may include an emergency evaluation, outside counseling, monitoring in school, etc.
- Parent Awareness:
  - Inform parents about teen depression, suicide and prevention.
  - Provide parents with recommendations for follow-up services for those individual students interviewed.

## **SIGNS OF SUICIDE (SOS) HIGH SCHOOL AWARENESS PREVENTION PROGRAM: NUTS AND BOLTS**

### Schools Involved

- Seventh grade health classes or another appropriate class in all WCPSS Middle Schools

### School Staff Required

- Administrator
- SOS Program Coordinator (Someone from Student Services)
- Health Educators/classroom teacher
- School Clinical staff (Counselors, Psychologist, Social Workers, Nurses)

### Training

- CASS will provide SOS material and train Student Services and other staff upon request

### Curriculum Delivery

- Curriculum is presented in health classes or another agreed upon class by someone from Student Services (teacher remains in the classroom during program implementation)
- Curriculum (introduction, video, discussion, screening, and scoring) may be presented in one or more classroom presentations. Curriculum provides a video, script, and talking points along with supplemental instructional ideas to help build a solid lesson.
  - Review the signs of depression and suicide
  - Answer questions; dispel myths
  - Show the video and facilitate a discussion
  - Review the Screening Form
- Additional supplies needed:
  - 2 envelopes with teacher name and period
  - Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC) & (YRBS)
  - Response Cards
  - Resource List or Card
- CES-DC/YRBS Screening Instrument is completed and scored by students
- Response Cards distributed to students so that they can request support.
- Student returns the following (and teacher places each in separate envelopes):
  1. Completed CES-DC & YRBS with voluntary identification
  2. Response cards
- Resource Card distributed to students with information on where to get help.
- Counselor takes envelopes and immediately reviews surveys and response cards then recommendations for immediate follow-up will be made for students who:
  - Request to be seen on the response card
  - \*score over 15 on the CES-DC\*
  - Answer "yes" to any of question on the YRBS

\*Only possible if student identified themselves on the scale

### CES-DC & YRBS and Response Card

- surveys are anonymous with voluntary identification
- Students score their own surveys.
- All students complete and turn in a Response Card/YRBS (with their names on the card) at the end of the period indicating whether or not they want to talk with an adult. These are reviewed immediately after the classroom presentation by CASS staff.
- Resource list/card is passed out to each student and offers information about local support and resource information.

### Follow-Up at Schools

- Students should be seen by a school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or district crisis team member **before the end of the school day** if they:
  - request to be seen on the Response Card; and/or
  - score over 15 on CES-DC (if name is on survey)
  - answer “yes” to any of questions on the YRBS
- Students who request to be seen by an adult on the Response Card are seen **before the end of the school day.**
- WCPSS suicide screening protocol will be used.
- Outside referrals are made for long-term support as needed.
- Classroom follow-up may be appropriate one week later (e.g., review warning signs, ACT, what to do/what not to do if concerned about a friend, etc).

### Recommended Presentation Schedule

- Classroom presentations scheduled once each semester in all health classes in order to target all seventh grade students.
- Presentation needs to be made in morning so that follow-up can be provided.
- To deliver curriculum to students in health classes offered in the afternoon, it is suggested that the school schedule be reversed on day of presentation so that presentations are in the morning and there is ample time for same-day follow-up for students requesting to see and adult.

### Parent Notification

- Passive Notification – letter provided by SOS that allows parents to opt out of program.
  - Survey and letter home to parents 2 weeks ahead of presentation.
  - Schools determine contact person for parents to send non-participation form.
- PTA meeting with information about presentation (recommended).

### Staff Notification

- Notify all school staff of curriculum presentation during the Annual Suicide Awareness Program and again at a staff meeting close to time of SOS presentation.
- Include/remind staff of warning signs, myths and facts and what to do if concerned about a student.
- Include bus drivers and support staff if possible.
- Email staff the day before SOS presentation with a reminder that curriculum will be delivered.

### Data Collection

- School coordinator will collect data on the number of referrals after the SOS presentation at the following intervals:
  - Immediately after presentation

\*Data will be collected for students who undergo WCPSS screening on the CASS Database