

SOS SIGNS OF SUICIDE® PREVENTION PROGRAM

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for students and their parents. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, RCPS is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program encourages students to seek help if they are concerned about themselves or a friend. The SOS 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 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration'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).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is treatable
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
- To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a trusted adult about their concerns
- To teach students who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

At the end of the presentation, all students will complete a form and share whether or not they wish to see a counselor about themselves or a friend. Information about this program is provided on the RCPS School Counseling website. If you would like to review the SOS program materials, please contact your school's LIFE counselor.

I give permission for my student to participate in the Signs of Suicide Program.