

Suicide is the act of taking one's own life and continues to be a serious problem among young people. Some youth may experience strong feelings of depression, stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while growing up. These can be very unsettling and can intensify self-doubts. For some, suicide may appear to be a solution to their problems and stress. Research has shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or questioning (LGBTQ) youth are more than twice as likely to attempt suicide than straight peers. However, sexual orientation is not noted on death certificates in the U.S. so exact completion rates are difficult to report. Studies have also confirmed that LGBTQ youth have higher rates of suicidal ideation than their straight peers and often have more severe risk factors. It is important to note that being LGBTQ is not a risk factor in and of itself; however, minority stressors that LGBTQ youth encounter – such as discrimination and harassment – are directly associated with suicidal behavior as well as indirectly with risk factors for suicide.

How it affects youth

Warning signs specific to LGBTQ Youth may include:

- Previous suicide attempts
- A diagnosable mental illness and/or substance use disorder
- Relationship issues
- A high rate of victimization/bullying
- Difficulties in dealing with sexual orientation
- Lack of family acceptance
- Expressing hopelessness or helplessness
- Having a plan

IMPORTANT

Some youth may exhibit many warning signs yet appear to be coping with their situation and others may show no signs and yet still feel suicidal. The only way to know for sure is to ask the youth and to consult a mental health professional.

How can we help?

Some factors which may help to lower a youth's risk of considering suicide are:

- Programs and services that increase social support and decrease social isolation among LGBTQ youth (support groups, hotlines, social networking)
- Access to effective, culturally competent care

- Support from medical and mental health professionals
- Coping, problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide
- Strong connections to family
- Family acceptance of one's sexuality and/or gender identity
- A feeling of safety and support at school
- Connectedness at school through peer groups
- Positive connections with friends who share similar interests
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide
- Positive role models and self-esteem

If you are worried that a youth may be thinking about suicide ask them directly if they are considering suicide. Ask whether they have made a specific plan and have done anything to carry it out. Explain the reasons for your concerns. Listen openly.

Be sure to express that you care deeply and that no matter how overwhelming his or her problems seem, help is available. All suicide threats should be taken seriously.

Immediately seek professional help from a doctor, community health center, counselor, psychologist, social worker, youth worker or minister if you suspect a suicide attempt. In Maryland, call 2-1-1, press 1. You can also call 1-800-SUICIDE or research suicide hotlines and crisis centers.

If the youth is in immediate danger, do not leave them alone and seek help immediately. You can call 911 or take them to the emergency room. If the youth has a detailed plan or appears acutely suicidal and will not talk, they could be in immediate danger and it is important to get help right away. Do not leave the youth alone and seek help immediately.

Learn warning signs, risks, and other factors associated with suicide especially if the youth has made suicidal attempts or threats in the past.

Offer support.

Secure any firearms, dangerous weapons and medications.

Hotlines & Crisis Centers

Maryland Crisis Helpline

Dial 2-1-1, press 1
Text your zip code to 898-211
Or visit <https://211md.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK
1-800-273-8255 h
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

The Trevor Project

TREVOR LIFELINE: 1-866-488-7386

Resource Links

Children's Mental Health Matters!

Facts for Families — First Steps in Seeking Help
www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

This site contains resources for families to promote an understanding of mental illnesses.

www.aacap.org

Teen Suicide

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Teen-Suicide-010.aspx

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<http://www.afsp.org>

National Association of School Psychologists

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents & Educators
<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

NASP Resources: Mental Health Disorders

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/mental-health/mental-health-disorders>

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network

Virtual Resources

<https://www.glsen.org/resources/virtual-resources>

National Institute of Mental Health

NIMH strives to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness through basic clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)

<http://www.save.org>

The Trevor Project

A national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth.

www.thetrevorproject.org

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Information for Parents

<https://yellowribbon.org/get-help/i-am-a-parent.html>



an initiative of



The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), receives funding from the Maryland Department of Health – Behavioral Health Administration, the Maryland Family Network, and community sponsors. Together with the Maryland Coalition of Families, National Center for School Mental Health, MANSEF, and hundreds of community champions, we work to raise public awareness and acceptance of the importance of children's mental health to overall child and family wellbeing. We are grateful to the National Center for School Mental Health for their collaboration in creating these resources for families.