

# What You Should Know About Depression

- Depression is a treatable medical illness, not just a bad mood or an inevitable part of life's ups and downs.
- Depression affects 10-20% of adolescents and is the most common cause of disability in the United States.
- Depression in teens differs from depression in young children or adults.
- Teens are more affected by their social environment, more irritable than sad, and more chronically depressed.
- Depression affects people of all ages and backgrounds. However, postpubescent girls are twice as likely to suffer from serious depression than boys, and certain populations, such as LGBTQ youths and American Indians, suffer higher rates of depression.
- Untreated depression is the leading risk for suicide among adolescents.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals ages 10-34 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018).
- From 1999 through 2016, the total suicide rate increased 28% from 10.5 to 13.4 per 100,000 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018).
- Girls are twice as likely to attempt suicide but boys are 10 times more likely to succeed because they tend to choose more lethal methods of attempting suicide (e.g. guns).
- Depression can be linked to poor academic performance, poor social relationships, school absenteeism, dropping out, disruptive behavior, and school violence.
- Depressive episodes can resolve themselves but, if ignored, are likely to reoccur within a year.
- Talking to friends or family is an important source of support but on its own is not enough to treat depression.
- Nearly 70% of children and youth with serious mental health problems do not get treatment.
- Eighty percent of people treated for depression respond to treatment, which usually includes a combination of medication, psychotherapy, and support groups.

## Identifying Depression

Distinguishing depression from adolescents' normal mood swings can be difficult. School staff members should contact a mental health professional if a student exhibits symptoms that:

- Are new or changed in intensity, frequency, or manifestation
- Continue for a two or more weeks
- Interfere with the student's social and academic function
- Cause disruptive or uncontrolled behavior
- Reflect thoughts of hurting oneself or others

## Warning Signs of Depression in Adolescents

- Sadness, depressed mood, or irritability
- Agitation, defiance, or sullenness

- Lack of pleasure in daily activities
- Withdrawal or crying
- Unexplained physical complaints (e.g., upset stomach)
- Lethargy or chronic boredom
- Poor concentration or inability to make decisions

Cash, R.E. (October 2003). *When It Hurts to Be a Teenager*. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/halthomas/Documents/Depression%20NASSP%20October%202003.pdf>

National Institute of Mental Health (May 2018). *Suicide*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>