



Dear Parent/Guardian:

We are pleased to have the opportunity to offer students in Billings Public Schools a chance to participate in a program called Signs of Suicide (SOS) as part of our suicide prevention efforts. SOS is currently the only school prevention program listed in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. It provides school-based interventions that address suicide risks and prevention of suicide attempts.

### **Program Highlight**

The program highlights the relationship between depression and suicide by teaching that most often suicide is a fatal response to a treatable disorder - depression. In addition, the program focuses on the relationship between depression, suicide, and drug and alcohol use. SOS provides information for students to recognize depression in his/herself, as well as in their peers. It also teaches action steps that youths can take if they experience signs of depression, risk of suicide or see these signs in a friend.

### **SOS Goals**

The goals of the SOS prevention program are:

1. To increase understanding of depression as an illness, and suicide as a behavior related to untreated or poorly managed depression.
2. To improve attitudes about intervening with peers who are experiencing symptoms of depression and who might be thinking about suicide.
3. To encourage youths who may be contemplating suicide to seek help.

### **Program Presentation**

Trained school personnel will be presenting the program this fall. The presentations will occur in classes of all 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, or students who missed last year's presentations for various reasons.

### **SOS Core Component**

A core component of SOS is the "Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression", which will be administered during the presentation. The screening instrument asks students seven questions that require a "yes" or "no" response. Should a student score in the critical range on the screener, parents will be contacted. It is important to note that this information will not be shared with other school personnel.

### **Parent Online Link**

If you would like more information about SOS and the presentation that will be presented in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, please visit the SOS parent information portal online at the link [sossignsof suicide.org/parent](https://sossignsof suicide.org/parent) for a full explanation of the program along with the student videos that your child will view in the classroom presentation. If you would like to speak with someone directly about the SOS program, please contact your child's school counselor or call or email the Billings Public Schools SOS coordinator, Jennifer Smith, at 281-5071 and [smithj@billingschools.org](mailto:smithj@billingschools.org). We are happy to address any concerns or questions you may have.

Please note that you have the option to "opt out" your child from the SOS presentation and screening.

If you choose to **NOT** have your child participate in the SOS class presentation and screening, please sign below and return this notice to the school's main office before **October 5**. If you do not return the opt out, your child will automatically participate in the SOS programming.

I choose **NOT** to have my child participate in the SOS presentation and screening.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_