



## Suicide Prevention and Intervention Risk Factors & Warning Signs

There is no definitive checklist of either risk factors or warning signs for adolescent suicide. This handout is provided as a guideline. Please consult the Colorado School Safety Resource Center's: *Resources for Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention* for additional information.

**Risk factors** may predispose youth to suicide behavior while **warning signs** may indicate the possibility of a suicide crisis. If you are concerned about a student, be sure to immediately contact a mental health professional who will also notify parents. **DO NOT** leave the student unattended.

### Risk Factors

- Mental health disorders
- Familial factors
- Personality and behavioral traits
- Biological factors
- Environmental factors
- Genetic factors
- Psychosocial life events
- Situational crises

### **Most Common Situational Crises Associated With Suicide:**

- Death of a significant other (especially traumatic death)
- Parental divorce
- Family moves
- Incarceration
- Trouble at school
- Family violence
- Parental arguments
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Running away from home
- Exposure to suicidology in others

### **Other Considerations:**

- Impulsivity
- Substance use/abuse
- Access to firearms
- Uncertainty about the future
- School, relationship, societal failures or conflicts
- Contagion
- Ethnic minority youth and LGBTQ youth
- Students with disabilities



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### Warning Signs

- Change in sleeping and eating habits
- Withdrawal
- Fatigue
- Sudden change in personality that persists
- Hopelessness or helplessness
- Increased risk-taking
- Drop in grades
- Neglect in appearance
- Drug/alcohol abuse
- Inability to concentrate or think rationally
- Change in or lack of interests both current and future, excessive boredom
- Frequent complaints of headache, stomachache, fatigue
- Irritability, anger/lashing out at others, intolerant of praise
- Suddenly becomes cheerful after period of being unhappy (may be increased risk)
- Giving away possessions
- Talking about death
- Verbal hints

### **Behavioral Signs**

1. Suicide threats
2. Suicide plan, method, and means
3. Previous attempts
4. Making final arrangements
5. Suicide notes
6. Symptoms of depression

### **Sample Verbal Warning Signs**

- “Everybody would be better off if I just weren’t around.”
- “I’m not going to bug you much longer.”
- “I hate my life. I hate everyone and everything.”
- “I’m the cause of all of my family’s/friend’s troubles.”
- “I wish I would just go to sleep and never wake up.”
- “I’ve tried everything but nothing seems to help.”
- “Nobody can help me.”
- “I want to kill myself but I don’t have the guts.”
- “I’m no good to anyone.”
- “If my (father, mother, teacher) doesn’t leave me alone I’m going to kill myself.”
- “Don’t buy me anything. I won’t need any (clothes, books).”
- “If I don’t see you again, thanks for everything.”
- “It doesn’t matter now.”
- “I love you, remember that.”

### Concerns During School Discipline:

- Safety must always be considered
- All discipline should include a proactive-support plan – not just punishment
- Student is never left unsupervised
- Removing structure can make student feel more out-of-control & contribute to suicidal ideation
- Inform parents of precautions and/or concerns



### Online Resources:

- *After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools, Second Edition* <https://sprc.org/resources-programs/after-suicide-toolkit-schools>
- *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Awareness Programs*  
<https://afsp.org/bring-suicide-prevention-to-your-school>
- *Colorado Crisis Services: 1-844-493-8255 (TALK) Text TALK to 38255*  
[www.coloradocrisisservices.org](http://www.coloradocrisisservices.org)
- *Colorado Safe School Resource Center (CSSRC) Resources for Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention*  
[https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/CSSRC\\_Resource\\_Guides/CSSRCSuicidePreventionResourceGuide2021.pdf](https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/Resources/CSSRC_Resource_Guides/CSSRCSuicidePreventionResourceGuide2021.pdf)
- *Colorado Suicide Data Dashboard* <https://www.cohealthdata.dphe.state.co.us/Data/Details/11>
- *Healthy Kids Colorado Survey and Smart Source Information*  
<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hkcs>
- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255* <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*  
<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>
- *Support on Social Media* <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/safety-and-support-on-social-media/>

### Online Resource Apps:

Be Safe <https://besafeapp.ca/>

Better Stop Suicide [https://thebetterappcompany.com/better\\_stop\\_suicide](https://thebetterappcompany.com/better_stop_suicide)

Calm <https://www.calm.com/>

Headspace <https://www.headspace.com/>

Suicide Safety Plan <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/suicide-safety-plan/id1003891579>