

SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster of emotions – difficult for students and their parents. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) does occur in some adolescents. 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, Ellicott Middle and High School (for grades 7-12) is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program aims to increase help-seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend. SOS is listed on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices and in a randomized control study, the SOS High School Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- 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 suicidality 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 responsible adult about their concerns
- To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it

The school counselors will be going into grade 7-12 classrooms beginning the week of January 22, 2018 to show a video, have a discussion and administer a Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (a copy is provided in the link). The screener will be anonymous and self-scored. Students will also fill out a response card (non-anonymously) that will have students indicate if they need to talk to someone about themselves or a friend or do not need to talk to someone.

If you do NOT wish your child participating in the SOS Program, please click on the permission form link, print and sign the document and return it to your child's respective school (Middle School or High School). Printed forms will also be available at the schools. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Margaret Bloomer, Middle School Counselor or Amber Scalva, High School Counselor at (719) 683-2700.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith
Ellicott School District Superintendent