



# KNOW<sup>THE</sup> SIGNS



# KNOW THE SIGNS

People who are at-risk of hurting themselves or others often show signs and signals before an act of violence takes place.

**80% of school shooters**  
told someone of their violent plans prior to the event.\*

**70% of people**  
who die by suicide told someone of their plans or **gave some type of warning or indication.\*\***

## KNOW THE SIGNS Programs

We teach youth and adults how to identify, intervene and get help for individuals BEFORE they hurt themselves or others. We offer and deliver, at no cost, to schools and youth organizations, four *Know the Signs* programs. For more information on how to bring programs to your community, email us at [programs@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:programs@sandyhookpromise.org).



### Say Something™

Teaches youth how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others and “Say Something” to a trusted adult BEFORE it is too late.



### Start With Hello™

Teaches youth how to minimize social isolation, marginalization and rejection by creating an inclusive community that reaches out and connects with at-risk individuals BEFORE they choose to hurt themselves or others.



### Safety Assessment & Intervention™

Teaches adults in schools and youth organizations how to identify, assess and respond to threats of violence or at-risk behavior BEFORE a tragedy takes place. The program not only addresses the threat itself, but also helps identify and treat the underlying issue in that youth's life that led to him/her making the threat.



### SOS Signs Of Suicide®

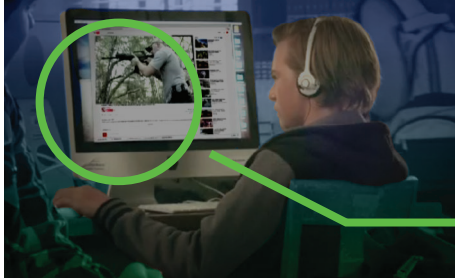
Teaches youth and adults about the warning signs of depression and suicide, and action steps to get help when concerned about themselves or a friend BEFORE a tragedy occurs.

\*Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W., The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, Washington, D.C., 2002.

\*\*Robins, E., Gassner, S., Kayes, J., Wilkinson, R. H., & Murphy, G.E. (1959). The communication of suicidal intent: A study of 134 consecutive cases of successful (completed) suicide. *Am J Psychiatry*, 115(8), 724-733.

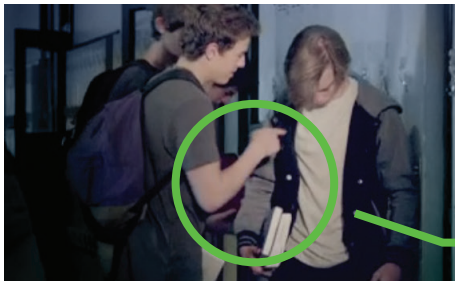
## When you don't know what to look for, it can be easy to miss signs, or dismiss them as unimportant, sometimes with tragic consequences.

It's important to know that one warning sign on its own does not mean a person is planning an act of violence. But when many connected or cumulative signs are observed over a period of time, it could mean that the person is heading down a pathway towards violence or self-harm. By knowing the signs, you have the power to intervene and get help for that person. Your actions can save lives.



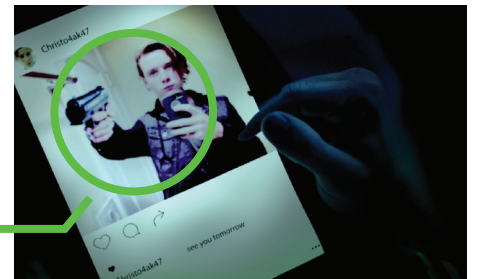
- A strong fascination or obsession with firearms can be a warning sign.
- Excessive study of firearms and mass shootings can mean a person is planning violence.

- Exhibiting excessive over-reactions or aggressive behavior for a seemingly minor reason can signal someone who cannot self-regulate their emotions or control their anger.
- Gestures of violence and low commitment or aspirations toward school, or a sudden change in academic performance can be a sign that someone needs help.



- Perpetrators of self-harm or violence towards others may be victims of long-term bullying and may have real or perceived feelings of being picked on or persecuted by others.
- Extreme feelings of isolation or social withdrawal due to real or perceived actions of others can lead to further withdrawal from society.

- Unsupervised, illegal and/or easy access to firearms, or bragging about access to firearms, can be a warning sign.
- Making overt threats of violence (spoken, written, pictures, videos, gestures) are signs that should not be ignored.



We've already trained over  
**2 MILLION PEOPLE**  
in all 50 states across the country.

To **bring our free programs** to  
your school or community,  
email us at [programs@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:programs@sandyhookpromise.org)

## Additional warning signs and signals:

**If you observe multiple warning signs or signals, or even one definitive threat, please take it seriously and act immediately. Talk to law enforcement, school officials or a mental health professional. In the event of an emergency, immediately call 911. Though we can't list every possible warning sign, these provide the most common indications:**

### Being over aggressive and/or lacking self-control

- Lack of coping, anger management and/or conflict resolutions skills
- Making overt threats of violence, in pictures, videos, spoken or written word
- Committing juvenile/multiple offenses, especially if at a young age (<10)
- Patterns of impulsive behavior and/or chronic hitting
- Regularly using intimidation or bullying behaviors

### Chronic social isolation

- Victim of constant social rejection or marginalization
- Sudden increase in withdrawing from other people and activities
- Blaming others for own failures

### Threatening behavior

- Bringing a weapon into school
- Bragging about an upcoming attack
- Recruiting a friend to join an attack
- Warning a friend to stay away from school or an event

### Mental illness and/or behavioral shifts

- Diagnosed or undiagnosed mental illness
- Major change in eating or sleeping habits
- Drop in quality of school work, extracurricular activities
- Homicidal ideation

- Significant personality change
- Dramatic changes in physical appearance
- Suffered from adverse childhood experiences (trauma)

### Youth suicide warning signs

- Talking about or making plans for suicide
- Expressing hopelessness about the future
- Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress
- Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. This includes:
  - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situation
  - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
  - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
  - Recent increased agitation or irritability

### Antisocial behavior

- Negative role models or peer groups
- Dishonesty, antisocial beliefs and hostility toward law enforcement
- Lack discipline – repeatedly fail to follow rules
- Severe destruction of property
- Intolerance for differences in others; prejudiced
- Access/use and prevalence of drugs and alcohol/substance abuse

## Proof it helps to KNOW THE SIGNS:

*“Within days of participating in Say Something, a student made an anonymous tip to report that there was a loaded weapon on the school campus. The police intervened, found the loaded weapon and made 4 arrests – preventing a tragedy before it took place. Say Something works.”*

*“The same day as our Say Something presentation, a student posted a suicide threat on Instagram. Another student – trained in Say Something that very day – saw the post and told a parent.”*





# How can I prevent gun violence from happening?

Sandy Hook Promise's *Know the Signs* gun violence prevention programs teach youth and adults how to identify, intervene and get help for individuals at-risk of harming themselves or others. This guide provides an overview of the "signs and signals" to look for and what to do when you see them. Additionally, it explains how to bring our certified trainers to your school and youth organizations to teach our *Know the Signs* programs, **at no cost**, to students, parents and community leaders.

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Prevent gun violence  
**before it starts.**

# About Sandy Hook Promise

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**Sandy Hook Promise (SHP)** is a non-partisan national nonprofit formed and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. Based in Newtown, Connecticut, SHP's sole purpose is to prevent gun violence **BEFORE** it happens so that no other parents experience the senseless, horrific loss of their child. SHP delivers, **at no cost**, four *Know the Signs* programs and practices that teach youth and adults to recognize signs and signals of individuals who may be at-risk of hurting themselves or others and intervene to get them help before it is too late. SHP's *Know The Signs* programs have helped stop multiple school shootings, suicides and gun threats, reduced bullying and victimization, and helped hundreds of youth to receive mental health and wellness assistance.

For more information about Sandy Hook Promise and our *Know the Signs* program, please visit **[www.sandyhookpromise.org](http://www.sandyhookpromise.org)**. To bring our free programs to your school or community, please email us at:

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**[programs@sandyhookpromise.org](mailto:programs@sandyhookpromise.org)**

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**Gun violence is preventable when you *Know the Signs*.  
Learn how and stop it before it starts.**



Sandy Hook  
**PROMISE**