



Board of Education
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ONslow
 COUNTY
 SCHOOLS



Superintendent
 Barry D. Collins, Ed.D.

Dear Onslow County Schools Families,

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride 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) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide.

To proactively address this, your child’s school is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention education as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program encourages students to seek help if they are concerned about themselves or a friend. The SOS Program is the only youth suicide prevention program that has demonstrated an improvement in students’ knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, as well as a reduction in actual suicide attempts. Listed on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, the SOS Program has shown a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64% in randomized control studies (Aseltine et al., 2007; Schilling et al., 2016).

Our goals in participating in this program include:

- 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 education on how to identify serious depression and potential suicide risk 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 trusted adult about their concerns
- To teach students who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

The Onslow County Schools system believes that it is very important that students receive the information that will be presented through the SOS program. At the same time, we realize that this is a very sensitive topic and some parents/guardians do not want their children to discuss youth suicide in a classroom setting. With that in mind, we are asking **parents/guardians who do not want their children to participate in this program to complete the form below and return it** by Monday, October 26, 2020 to your child’s homeroom/advisory teacher. If you do wish for your child to participate in the SOS program, there is no need to return this form. If it is not returned, it will be assumed that permission **has** been granted by the parent or guardian. Any student who does not receive instruction in the SOS program will receive alternate assignments and be fully responsible for completing them.

For more information on the SOS program, please visit: www.mindwise.org/act

Sincerely,
 Curtis Ehmann
 Principal

I do not give my permission for (student name) _____ to receive instruction on youth suicide prevention through the SOS program.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____