

SOS: SIGNS OF SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) Suicide Prevention Team is pleased to provide qualifying school districts the Signs of Suicide program made possible through a federal youth suicide prevention grant. Please read how to receive this very important program at no charge to your school.

Brief Program Description

SOS Signs of Suicide is a 2-day secondary school-based intervention that includes screening and education. Students are screened for depression and suicide risk and referred for professional help as indicated. Students also view a video that teaches them to recognize signs of depression and suicide in others. They are taught that the appropriate response to these signs is to acknowledge them, let the person know you care, and tell a responsible adult (either with the person or on that person's behalf). Students also participate in guided classroom discussions about suicide and depression. The intervention attempts to prevent suicide attempts, increase knowledge about suicide and depression, develop desirable attitudes toward suicide and depression, and increase help-seeking behavior.

Program Strategies

The basic message of SOS is to teach middle and high school students to respond to the signs of suicide as a mental health emergency, much as one would react to a heart attack as a health emergency. Students are taught to recognize the signs of suicide and depression in them and others and the specific action steps needed to respond to those signs. The goal of the SOS program is to make the action step--ACT--as instinctual a response as the Heimlich maneuver and as familiar an acronym as "CPR". The acronym ACT stands for Acknowledge, Care, and Tell. First, one must "acknowledge" the signs of suicide that others display and take them seriously. Next, one must let the person know that you "care" about them and that you want to help. Lastly, youth are instructed to "tell" a responsible adult.

The program's main teaching materials are a video (featuring dramatizations depicting the signs of suicidality and depression, recommended ways to react to someone who is depressed and suicidal, as well as interviews with real people whose lives have been touched by suicide) and a discussion guide. Students are also asked to complete a brief screening instrument for depression.

Population Focus

Participants are middle and high school students in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Suitable Settings

The intervention is suitable for middle and high school settings.

Implementation Timeline

The average amount of time to implement the program is approximately 2 days.

What comes in the SOS Toolkit?

SOS High School Kit

- *Includes materials for 300 students and their parents*
- Implementation Guide: Step-by-step instructions including training materials, educational resources, lesson plans, and templates
- Educational DVD and Discussion Guide: The Friends for Life: Preventing Teen Suicide DVD describes the signs and symptoms of depression and suicide
- Programs materials available in English and Spanish
 - Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (BSAD): A seven question screening tool for depression.
 - Staff Materials: Training guide and video explain how to implement the program
 - Self-injury Packet: Educational materials for parents and staff
 - Postvention Guidelines
 - Additional Resources: Customizable wallet cards and posters with ACT message

SOS Booster Kit

- *Includes materials for 300 graduating high school seniors*
- Implementation Guide: Step-by-step instructions and options for program implementation
- Educational Video and Discussion Guide: Helps to prepare seniors for mental health situations that may arise after graduation
- Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (BSAD): A brief seven question screening tool for depression
- Parent Resources: Strategies to help parents communicate with their children about mental health issues that may arise when they are away from home
- Educational Handouts for students and parents

SOS Middle School Kit

- *Includes materials for 300 students and their parents*
- Implementation Guide: Step-by-step instructions including training materials, educational resources, lesson plans, classroom games and templates
- Educational DVD and Discussion Guide: SOS: Get into the Act! describes the signs and symptoms of depression, suicide and self-injury
- Self-injury Packet: Educational materials for parents and staff

- Additional Resources: Customizable wallet cards, posters with the ACT message, ACT stickers, student newsletters and parent newsletters

What are the requirements for obtaining a free kit?

- A signed [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) with clearly identified training and implementation dates included before you receive the toolkit
- Requested [QPR Training](#) for school, staff or community. QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer, and is the gold standard in non-mental health professional gatekeeper suicide prevention training. It is a 90 minute training session.
- An evaluation is required to be completed and sent back following the implementation of the program.

For more information about obtaining a FREE SOS Toolkit, please contact CHFS Suicide Prevention:

Jan Ulrich
*SPYCE Technical Assistance
and Media Specialist*
(502) 564-4456, Ext. 4436
[Email Jan](#)