

# RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO WARNING SIGNS FOR SUICIDE

**Warning signs** are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future.

*Warning Signs for Suicide Prevention* is a consensus statement developed by an expert working group brought together by the American Association of Suicidology. The group organized the warning signs by degree of risk, and emphasized the importance of including clear and specific direction about what to do if someone exhibits warning signs.

This consensus statement describes the general warning signs of suicide. Warning signs differ by age group, culture, and even individual.

The recent advent of social media has provided another outlet in which warning signs may be exhibited. The differences in how and where warning signs may be exhibited demonstrate the importance of adapting gatekeeper training for the age group and cultural communities with whom the gatekeepers will be interacting.

## Warning Signs for Suicide and Corresponding Actions

Seek immediate help from a mental health provider, 9-1-1 or your local emergency provider, or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) when you hear or see any one of these behaviors:

- Someone threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Someone looking for ways to kill themselves: seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means
- Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person

Seek help by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-TALK for a referral if you witness, hear, or see anyone exhibiting one or more of these behaviors:

- Hopelessness—expresses no reason for living, no sense of purpose in life
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Recklessness or risky behavior, seemingly without thinking
- Expressions of feeling trapped—like there's no way out
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society
- Anxiety, agitation, inability to sleep, or constant sleep
- Dramatic mood changes
- No reason for living, no sense of purpose in life

**If you or someone you know is in a suicidal crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)—National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

The contents of this handout are taken from *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*, available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA12-4669>.

## REFERENCE

Rudd, M. D., Berman, A. L., Joiner, T. E. Jr., Nock, M. K., Silverman, M. M., Mandrusiak, M., . . . Witte, T. (2006). Warning signs for suicide: Theory, research, and clinical applications. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 36(3), 255–262. Retrieved from [http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~nock/nocklab/Rudd%20et%20al\\_warning%20signs%20for%20suicide\\_2006.pdf](http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~nock/nocklab/Rudd%20et%20al_warning%20signs%20for%20suicide_2006.pdf)