



ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC

Anita Foeman, Ph.D. and Nate Terrell, LCSW

856-223-0606; nateterrell@verizon.net

www.organizationalgrowth.com

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT STUDENT SUICIDE

Developed by Nate Terrell, LCSW and Anita Foeman, Ph.D.

- 1) Recognize the warning signs that children and adolescents might be thinking about suicide. These include increased social isolation, talking/writing about suicide, giving away favorite possessions, highly unrealistic self-expectations and risk taking behavior.
- 2) Take **all** suicide threats seriously. It is a myth that children and adolescents who talk about suicide are not at risk. In fact, 80% of adolescents who commit suicide gave some indication of their intentions.
- 3) Assess how at risk suicidal students are by asking them if they have a plan and the means to carry it out. It is also important to assess their level of hopelessness.
- 4) Conduct suicide screenings to identify students at risk through the use of written questionnaires and/or interviews.
- 5) Immediately refer students who are at risk for suicide to mental health professionals who can meet their needs through crisis intervention, intensive individual and/or family therapy, hospitalization, etc.
- 6) Insure that every student has a strong connection with at least one adult within your school community.
- 7) Overcome any fears you have about discussing suicide with students. Students who are not suicidal generally do not become so when the topic is discussed.
- 8) Talk honestly and openly with children and adolescents who are having suicidal thoughts, fantasies, etc. in order provide them with the support and guidance they need to overcome the problems they are facing.
- 9) Use cognitive therapy strategies to help children and adolescents who are thinking about suicide such as helping them to identify and change their irrational thoughts and beliefs about themselves, their future and the world around them.
- 10) Teach children and adolescents at risk for suicide the problem solving and conflict resolution skills they need to overcome the challenges they are facing
- 11) Develop support groups and/or a peer mentoring program for suicidal children and adolescents to provide them with an opportunity to develop deeper connections to their peers to and receive the help they need to overcome the problems they are facing.
- 12) Publicize crisis hotlines and other mental health resources throughout Brigantine School District so that students know where they can turn for help.
- 13) Hold regular training sessions to educate all students about strategies they can use to overcome stress/depression, become happier, gain greater inner peace, etc.

- 14) Educate parents about warning signs concerning suicide and strategies they can use to prevent suicide.
- 15) Continually inform students that they have a responsibility to inform an adult if they know a fellow student who is at risk for suicide and that many suicides are prevented when peers have the courage to speak up to save the lives of their fellow students.
- 16) Develop programs within your school to help prevent substance abuse among students since drug and alcohol use greatly increases the risk of suicide.
- 17) Eliminate bullying by teaching school staff strategies they can use to respond effectively to bullies, mobilize student bystanders to intervene to protect victims, etc.
- 18) Educate students about the potential toxic impact of cyber bullying, sexting, etc. and that peer pressure is the key to making sure no one is victimized through my space, cell phones, e-mail, etc.
- 19) Create a caring community within which every student is treated with respect and differences among students are celebrated rather than serving as lightning rods for teasing, conflict, etc.