

## Supporting your Child to Prevent Suicide – LEARN® (Adapted from Forefront)

As youth grow, it can become more challenging for caregivers to know what they are thinking and feeling. It can be hard to tell the difference between typical ups and downs of adolescence and when there is something to worry about. Sometimes, youth are overwhelmed and can feel like suicide is their only option. It is important to take any concerns regarding suicide seriously.



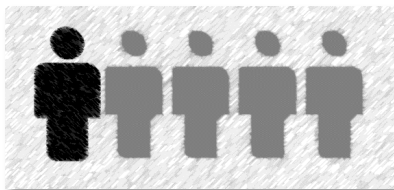
Follow the steps below to support your child who may be experiencing distress or suicidal ideation.

**LEARN®: Look** for signs, **Empathize** and listen, **Ask** directly about suicide, **Remove** the dangers, **Next** steps

### 1. Look for Signs: Below are ways kids might be showing warning signs

#### Physical

- Sleeping all of the time or being unable to sleep
- Physical illness
- Changes in eating patterns



1 in 5 Youth reported having suicidal ideation this past month

#### Psychological

- Hopelessness, feeling no reason for living or no sense of purpose in life
- Having rage, anger, or seeking revenge
- Feeling trapped
- Dramatic change in mood (may even be a shift from sad to happy)
- Being anxious or agitated
- History of depression or other mental/substance-use disorders
- Deep feelings of grief, anger, shame

#### Behavioral

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means to kill themselves
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
- Engaging in risky activities
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or activities
- Giving away prized possessions
- Isolating from daily life

### 2. Empathize and listen

- It is important to validate your child's feelings. Expressing statements showing empathy and understanding rather than telling them to "pull it

together" shows you are listening and understand. Talk about some of the specific problems they're experiencing.

### 3. Ask directly about suicide

- Some caregivers can feel uncomfortable asking directly about suicide for fear they are adding the thought into their child's head. All research states asking direct statements like "are you wanting to kill yourself" does not increase the likelihood of suicide and allows caregivers to understand the intentions of their child. Be comfortable with the time it may take for your child to respond and keep calm.

### 4. Remove the dangers

- If your child says yes, ask these questions one at a time:
  - "Do you have a time when you're thinking of doing this?"
  - "Do you have a plan?"
  - "Do you have access to the method to carry out that plan?"

Youth often know where keys are hidden. Make sure to lock up all medications (even over-the-counter), lock up or temporarily remove firearms from the home, and in crisis, lock up belts, ropes, knives, and chemicals. Creating a barrier between the method and youth is an effective way to prevent suicide. Suicidal crises tend to pass over time.

### 5. Next steps

- Take action and get help immediately. **If your child has engaged in a suicide plan, do not hesitate to take them to the hospital or medical center.** If you're concerned about your child's wellbeing, contact any of these free and confidential services. A trained crisis counselor will listen and provide support or resources that may be helpful. Have youth add the Crisis Text Line or Lifeline into their phones.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24/7) – 1-800-273-8255**

**Crisis Text Line (24/7) – Text 741 741**

**Trevor Project (Supports LGBTQ Youth 24/7) – 1-866-488-7386**

- Connect with your school support team to find ways to partner together and support your child.
- Help youth access healthy coping skills and connecting with trusted adults when they are needing support. There are a few apps, like MY3, that help youth define their network and create a plan to utilize when they need support.

**Additional Resources, Tools, and Coping Skills:** <https://www.crisistextline.org/resources/>