

What can you do if you are worried your child might be suicidal?

DURING A SUICIDE CRISIS THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- ◆ **Be aware.** Trust and listen to your instincts. Learn the warning signs.
- ◆ **Get involved.** Be available to the adolescent, both physically and emotionally.
- ◆ **Take it seriously.** ALL suicide threats and attempts must be taken seriously.
- ◆ **Do not leave your child alone.** Closely monitor him/her until help is available.
- ◆ **Show interest and support; listen and ask questions.**
 - ✓ *Do NOT be afraid to be direct.*
Take the initiative to ask what is troubling him/her and persist to overcome any reluctance to talk about it. If your child or adolescent is depressed ask directly if he/she is considering suicide. It is alright to ask if they have a specific plan or method in mind. *Using the word “suicide” will NOT increase chances that some will take their own life.*
 - ✓ *Do NOT attempt to “argue” anyone out of suicide.* Instead, let the person know you care and understand. Assure them that they are not alone, suicidal feelings are temporary, depression can be treated, problems can be solved, you will always be there for them.
- ◆ **Safeguard the area.** Remove and encourage the person to give up anything they could use to hurt themselves (e.g., guns, knives or other sharp objects, pills, etc.) Not only will removing these items potentially reduce the chance of an impulsive suicide but it will also show your concern and ability to intervene on the adolescent’s behalf.
- ◆ **Seek professional help.** Take your child for an immediate evaluation in an emergency room. If you believe your child will not be safe during the drive to the hospital, call 911 for an ambulance. You may also consult with the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** [<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>] at **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- ◆ **Follow-up on treatment.** Take an active role in facilitating your child’s access and adherence to treatment. This may entail accompanying your child to therapy or making sure he/she is taking medication(s). Pay attention to possible medication side-effects and be sure to notify the physician. Often, alternative medications can be prescribed. Advocate for your child; don’t be afraid to push “the system” to make it work.