

# SUICIDE FACT SHEET FOR JOB CORPS STAFF

## How can you tell who is at risk for suicide?

You can never be certain who will commit suicide; however, there are some risk factors to look for.

Risk factors include:

- Previous suicide attempt
- Mental illness
- Problems with alcohol or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Stressful situation or loss
- Friend or family member who committed suicide



- A student who is looking for means to kill him/herself. Means may include firearms, pills, or suffocation methods
- A student who gives away their prized possessions
- A student who is especially calm or happy after a period of depression without resolving their problems
- A student who has attempted suicide in the past, and is showing any of the warning signs

## What should I do if I think a student is contemplating suicide?

Whatever you do, do not ignore the warning signs. If you think a student is suicidal, ask them directly if they are considering suicide. Listen to what they have to say. If you think there is any chance that a student is contemplating suicide, help them get professional help. This will probably be in the form of a referral to the Health and Wellness Center and/or Center Mental Health Consultant.

## Is there anything thing I shouldn't do if I think a student is suicidal?

Yes, there are a few things that you should not do:

- As already stated, don't dismiss or discount a suicide threat.
- This isn't the time for a philosophical argument about whether they should live or die. Only argue that they should live.
- Don't be afraid to talk to the person.
- Don't panic when the person talks about suicide. Try to appear calm. At the same time, try not to appear overly cool. Show concern, not panic.
- Don't argue with the person by making such statements as "This isn't going to make things better," or "Suicide is a sin."
- Don't make light of the situation. Don't joke around and don't change the subject.
- Don't leave the person alone if you think there is an imminent threat.

## What protects students from suicidal behavior?

There are several factors that protect against suicide. These include:

- Strong connections to family and community
- Supportive medical and mental health-care relationships
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent handling of disputes
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation

## What kind of warning signs should I look out for?

Keep an eye out for students who show sudden changes in mood, drink or do drugs when they haven't in the past, begin to perform badly in their trade or academics, or start to behave recklessly. Some signs are very serious. Take immediate action if you notice any of the following signs:

- A student threatens to hurt or kill him/herself, or makes statements like "Things will be better when I'm gone," or "My family would be better off without me."
- A student who writes or talks a lot about death, dying, or suicide