

# YELLOW RIBBON

*Be a Link!*<sup>®</sup>

**Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training**

**Workshop I**

***Please turn to Tab 1***



## ***Why is the Children's Wellness Curriculum important?***

The role of the School in Suicide Prevention for children is important as children spend a substantial part of their day in school under the supervision of school personnel.

It is crucial for all school staff to be familiar with protective and risk factors and warning signs of suicidal behavior, and know how to intervene and respond.



## ***Why is the Children's Wellness Curriculum important?***

Education programs for students and school personnel which teach children how to ask for help for themselves or a friend and which give gatekeepers skills in identifying children at risk and sources of help are shown to be good strategy for preventing child suicide<sup>2</sup>.



## ***Why is the Children's Wellness Curriculum important?***

It is a primary prevention approach to teaching children a vital life skill, that it is okay to ask for help!

This unique program fills a gap and moves “upstream” by helping children develop skills so that by the time they reach adolescence, help seeking behavior is ingrained



## ***Why is the Children's Wellness Curriculum important?***

Many teachers and school faculty have asked the critical question; how do I talk to my own kids about such a subject. As an elementary-level educator, you may find yourself needing to have this knowledge for your students, as well as your own family.

Data shows that parents do have a powerful influence on children to reduce suicidal ideation<sup>7</sup>



## ***Children and Suicide***

- ❖ Though suicide is very rare under age 14, studies show high rates of nonfatal suicidal behaviors and ideation. Statistics also verify that children do act upon suicidal thoughts.<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Research has found that children by ages 8-9, do have an understanding of suicide, and that younger children understand the concept of “killing oneself”<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ An undetermined number of traumatic injuries and “accidental” self-poisonings are believed to be suicidal in their intent<sup>8</sup>



## **Objectives of this Training**

- ❖ To learn Protective Factors and Connectedness as a strategic direction for the prevention of suicidal behavior
- ❖ To learn the Warning Signs, and to be aware of developing risk factors and how these can be mediated.
- ❖ To learn about and identify resources that you can use in a safe and timely manner
- ❖ To learn how to respond when a child asks for help



## **Warning Signs / Behaviors**

**Warning Signs** are observable behaviors

- ❖ Excessive somatic complaints (head - body aches)<sup>11</sup>
- ❖ Poor school performance, marked decline in work<sup>11</sup>
- ❖ Anxiety or worry. sleep problems or nightmares<sup>12,13</sup>
- ❖ Absenteeism, not wanting to go to school<sup>13,14</sup>
- ❖ Hyperkinesis; fidgeting, constant movement<sup>13</sup>





## **Warning Signs / Behaviors**

- ❖ Bullying or being bullied<sup>12</sup>
- ❖ Suicidal threats or ideation (thoughts of suicide)<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ Attempt to harm self i.e.: cutting skin or rubbing objects (pencil eraser) on their body to break the skin<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ Children often express their pain in writing – artwork<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ Anger, frustration, frequent temper tantrums<sup>14</sup>



## **Risk Factors/Stressors**

***Risk Factors*** are markers;  
traits and characteristics

***Stressors*** are situations (events);  
that may contribute to suicide risk factor



## *Risk Factors/Stressors*

### **Internal Contributors**

- ❖ Learning difficulties/disabilities
- ❖ Developmental disorders
- ❖ Disorders, such as ADD/ADHD
- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



## *Risk Factors/Stressors*

### **External Contributors**

- ❖ Exposure to violence: Tragic public events; school shootings, etc. - repeated TV coverage of tragedies<sup>13,18</sup>
- ❖ Witnessing/experiencing family abuse<sup>15,16,18</sup>
- ❖ Death, suicide, illness of family members<sup>16</sup>
- ❖ Family moving, single family structure<sup>17</sup>



## ***Protective Factors***

Are the positive conditions, personal and social resources that promote resiliency and reduce the potential for youth suicide as well as other related high-risk behavior<sup>3</sup>



## *Protective Factors*

### **Internal- Personal**

- ❖ Knowing when and how to ask for help<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Strong connections to family<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Strong sense of self-worth or self-esteem<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Strong attitudes and beliefs about the meaning and value of life<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Cultural identity<sup>20</sup>



## *Protective Factors*

### **External- Environmental**

- ❖ Cultural support<sup>18</sup>
- ❖ Reasonably safe and stable environment<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Strong relationships with family<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Pets – responsibilities/duties to others<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Connections to community<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Suicide Prevention Resource Center,

<sup>19</sup> Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program,

<sup>20</sup> Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)



## **Assisting a Child in Crisis**

Teachers are often the trusted adult that children and adolescents feel they can talk to.

But if that child came to a teacher feeling desperate, hopeless and contemplating suicide...





## **Assisting a Child in Crisis**

1. Are children just looking for attention?  
*Any talk of ending life is an ominous warning sign and should be treated seriously<sup>21</sup>*
2. What if we “misdiagnose”?  
*Don’t diagnose, assess ‘at-risk’ behavior and refer to an appropriate person within school*
3. Should we talk about suicide?  
*”Talking about suicide is the first step to preventing it, to breaking down the terrible isolation that a person considering it feels”<sup>22</sup>*



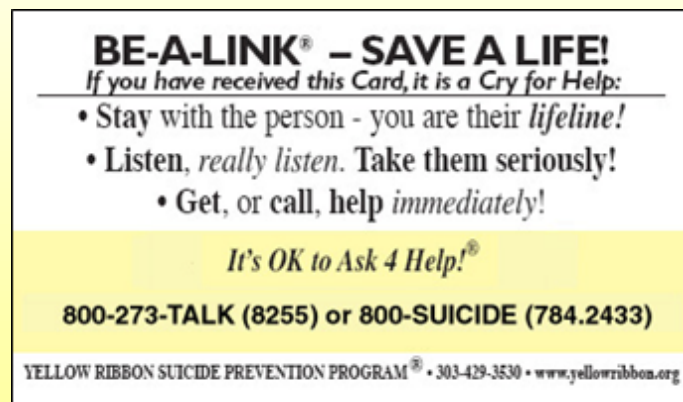
## ***Assisting a Child in Crisis***

- ❖ Tell them that it's OK to Ask for Help!
- ❖ Remain calm<sup>23</sup> – Don't act surprised
- ❖ Don't dismiss the problem or leave child alone, stay with them until help arrives<sup>23</sup>
- ❖ Listen with empathy - child may not be able to put his/her pain into words
- ❖ Report your concerns, follow school protocol



## ***Introducing the Ask 4 Help!® Card***

Children in your class may recognize this other tool, the Ask 4 Help!® Card, if they have older siblings and make the link to what you are teaching about asking for help.



## **Training Sequence**

- ❖ Be A Link!® Suicide Prevention Training for Staff  
*(Includes Curriculum Implementation)*
  
- ❖ Be A Link!® Suicide Prevention Training for parents and community *(Includes Curriculum review and is an optional training)*
  
- ❖ Ask 4 Help!® Student's Training – Children's Wellness Curriculum



# Questions?

YELLOW RIBBON Suicide Prevention Program®

[www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)

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