



*Speaking Out for the Well-Being of Children*

# FACT SHEET

## DEPRESSION IN TEENS: FACING THE DANGER OF TEEN SUICIDE

Sometimes teens feel so depressed that they consider ending their lives. Each year, almost 5,000 young people, ages 15 to 24, kill themselves. The rate of suicide for this age group has nearly tripled since 1960, making it the third leading cause of death in adolescents and the second leading cause of death among college-age youth.

Studies show that suicide attempts among young people may be based on long-standing problems triggered by a specific event. Suicidal adolescents may view a temporary situation as a permanent condition. Feelings of anger and resentment combined with exaggerated guilt can lead to impulsive, self-destructive acts.

### Recognizing the Warning Signs

Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warnings. Pay attention to these warning signs:

- Suicide threats, direct and indirect
- Obsession with death
- Poems, essays and drawings that refer to death
- Dramatic change in personality or appearance
- Irrational, bizarre behavior
- Overwhelming sense of guilt, shame or rejection
- Changed eating or sleeping patterns
- Severe drop in school performance
- Giving away belongings

**REMEMBER!!! These warning signs should be taken seriously. Obtain help immediately. Caring and support can save a young life.**

### Helping Suicidal Teens

- Offer help and listen. Encourage depressed teens to talk about their feelings. Listen, don't lecture.
- Trust your instincts. If it seems that the situation may be serious, seek prompt help. Break a confidence if necessary, in order to save a life.
- Pay attention to talk about suicide. Ask direct questions and don't be afraid of frank discussions. Silence is deadly!
- Seek professional help. It is essential to seek expert advice from a mental health professional who has experience helping depressed teens. Also, alert key adults in the teen's life — family, friends and teachers.

### Looking To The Future

When adolescents are depressed, they have a tough time believing that their outlook can improve. But professional treatment can have a dramatic impact on their lives. It can put them back on track and bring them hope for the future.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK [hyperlink to [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)] (1-800-273-8255).

## Other Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
3615 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20016-3007  
Phone Number: (202) 966-7300  
Fax: (202) 966-2891  
Email Address: [clinical@aacap.org](mailto:clinical@aacap.org)  
Website URL: [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

American Association of Suicidology  
4201 Connecticut Avenue NW; Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20008  
Phone: 202-237-2280

*Information via Mental Health America. Please visit <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/> for more information.*

*Tennessee Voices for Children speaks out as active advocates for the emotional and behavioral well-being of children and their families. We provide Advocacy, Training, Support, Referral, Prevention, and Early Intervention Services.*



*For more information, visit <http://www.tnvoices.org> or call 1-800-670-9882.  
Offices in Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, Jackson, and Columbia.*