

# Suicide Warning Signs

Get immediate attention for a **child or teen** who is **making direct statements or behaviors** related to wanting to hurt him or herself or wanting to die. Warning signs indicate a child or teen is struggling, too many warning signs might indicate a child or teen is suicidal. *Lifelines*\*\* uses the word **FACTS** to remember the warning signs.

## Feelings:

- Hopelessness: feeling like things are bad and won't get any better
- Fear of losing control, going crazy, harming himself/herself or others
- Helplessness: a belief that there's nothing that can be done to make life better
- Worthlessness: feeling like an awful person and people would be better off if he/she were dead
- Hating himself/herself, feeling guilty or ashamed
- Being extremely sad and lonely, feeling anxious, worried or angry all the time

## Action:

- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Talking or writing about death or destruction
- Aggression: getting into fights or having arguments with people
- Recklessness: doing risky or dangerous things

## Changes:

- Personality: behaving like a different person, becoming withdrawn, tired all the time, not caring about anything, or becoming more talkative, outgoing
- Behavior: can't concentrate on school or regular tasks
- Sleeping and eating patterns: sleeping all the time or not being able to sleep at all, or waking up in the middle of the night or early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep , losing appetite and/or overeating and gaining weight
- Losing interest in friends, hobbies, and appearance, or in activities or sports previously enjoyed
- Sudden improvement after a period of being down or withdrawn

## Threats:

- Statements like "How long does it take to bleed to death?"
- Threats like "I won't be around much longer" or "Don't tell anyone else...you won't be my friend if you tell!"
- Plans like giving away favorite things, studying about ways to die, obtaining a weapon or a stash of pills: the risk is very high if a person has a plan and the way to do it
- Suicide attempts like overdosing, wrist cutting

## Situations:

- Getting into trouble at school, at home, or with the law.
- Recent loss through death, divorce, or separation; the break-up of a relationship; losing an opportunity or a dream; losing self-esteem
- Changes in life that feel overwhelming
- Being exposed to suicide or the death of a peer under any circumstances

**For a Risk Assessment call the Child Priority Response\* Hotline:**

1-800-969-4357 (HELP) 24 hours/day, 7 days/week

\*Child Priority Response Crisis Service is fully funded by the DSCYF/Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and is provided by Delaware Guidance Services for Children and Youth.

\*\**Lifelines: An Evidenced Based Suicide Prevention Program* is authored by Maureen Underwood, LCSW and John Kalafat, PhD and is published by Hazelden. FACTS is being used with the permission of Ms. Underwood.

*Lifelines* is initially being introduced to Delaware's Middle Schools through a Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Suicide Prevention Grant which also is funding this guide. The GLS grant to DSCYF/Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).