

# Understanding When Your Child May be Suicidal & Ways to Help

## IS YOUR CHILD THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE?

### Warning Signs of Suicide:

#### **Severe**

- Talks or writes about wanting to die
- Has attempted suicide before
- Gives away personal possessions

#### **Concerning**

- Sudden or extreme changes in mood, both positive and negative.
- Sudden changes in behavior at home: (example - Starts arguments with family.)
  - at school: (example - Grades go down quickly.)
  - with peers: (example - Ends friendships.) (example - Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth who lose friends after sharing their sexual orientation are at risk for attempting suicide).
- Impulsive behaviors: (examples - using drugs/alcohol, criminal activity, risky sex.)
- Signs of depression: (examples - looking sad, changes in sleeping/eating patterns, loss of interest in activities/friends/appearance, irritable/angry mood, more tired than usual, statements about feeling hopeless, negative statements about self.)



## IF SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Assess for safety. Can your child be alone?

- **Don't be afraid to ask! Talking about suicide doesn't make teenagers do it.**
- **Be direct. Ask:** "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- Show concern and stay calm.
- Encourage them to express their feelings.
- Show them that you understand them from their point of view.
- Be non-judgmental. Avoid lecturing or trying to convince them to live.
- Don't try to offer quick solutions. You're not going to fix the problem immediately.
- The best thing to do is LISTEN.
- Offer hope that options other than suicide are available.

### Take Action

- If you feel your child is safe, offer your child company. If he or she wants space, check in on a regular basis (e.g. every 30 min) to make sure things are ok.
- Remove weapons, knives, razor blades, pills, linens, or any other item your child could use to harm him/herself.
- **\*\*Encourage your child to page his or her therapist**
- There are suicide hotlines available 24/7: 1-800-273-TALK En Español - 1-877-298-3373
- If you decide that your child is **not safe**, the best course of action may be to **call 911** or **take your child to the emergency room** to ensure your child's safety.