

# Youth Suicide

**“The Silent Epidemic” - Keeping  
More than Dreams Alive**

**ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PREVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES SECTION  
334.242.8165**

## Educators

On your worst day,  
you are some child's  
best hope!

Larry Bell

# Objectives

- ☑ Identify the scope and severity of the problem of youth suicide.
- ☑ Recognize general “signs of concern” or “warning signs” of suicidal ideation.
- ☑ Recognize certain issues that increase the “at-risk” factor in a youth.
- ☑ Learn about educational resources.

In 1999 ...

**Dr. David Satcher  
declared suicide as “A  
National Health Problem”  
..especially among our  
youth and the elderly.**

# Suicide Statistics

More than 32,000 people in the US die by suicide each year.

11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US.

3rd leading cause of death among those 15-24 years old.

# Suicide Statistics

Among young people aged 10-14, the suicide rate has DOUBLED in the last two decades.

Among African American males aged 15-19, the suicide rate has doubled in the last 25 years.

Every day, 12 young people die by suicide.  
That's one every two hours.

# Alabama Suicide Statistics

Alabama ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation among deaths by suicide (11.98/100,000) each year.

In AL, suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for those ages 15-24, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for those ages 25-34.

# Alabama Suicide Statistics

In 2006, 37 people between the ages of 10-19 died by suicide in the state of AL. These are verifiable suicides and do not account for suspected or unverified suicides.



# Methods Statistics

GUNS

SUFFOCATION

HANGING

DRUG OVERDOSE

POISONING

# What can Parents Do?

Listen to our children.

Educate ourselves and children about what to do if they are having suicidal thoughts or if they have a friend who has shared their suicidal intentions with them.

# What are the Signs?

In groups of three – five

- List possible “signs of concern” or “warning signs” of suicide ideation.
- Select a spokesperson for the group.
- Share out when all are ready.

# Signs of Concern or Warning Signs

- Depression/Sadness
- Drastic changes in behavior/personality
- Mood swings
- Crying spells
- Recent grief or loss(es)
- Changes in school performance
- Suicidal threats
- Hopelessness
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Giving away treasured belongings
- Making final dispositions of affairs
- Hoarding medications
- Taking unnecessary risk
- Talking about “having a plan” or “method” for suicide

# Risk Factors for Teen Suicide



**Mental Disorders**

**Substance Abuse/Addiction**

**Family Issues**

**Bullying**

**Prior Attempts**

**Exposure**

# Elevated Risk Factors

Although there is no such thing as a suicidal type of young person, the statistics on youth suicide do suggest that there are certain behaviors or characteristics that can alert you to a possible elevated risk of suicidal thought. Some of the most common elevated risk factors are listed below:

- ⦿ Perfectionists
- ⦿ Gay and lesbians
- ⦿ Learning disabled
- ⦿ Loners
- ⦿ Low self-esteem
- ⦿ Depressed youths
- ⦿ Students in trouble
- ⦿ Abused, molested or neglected
- ⦿ Abusers of drugs and alcohol

# Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Youth

Gay teens have significantly higher rates of both attempts and thoughts of suicide.

In his study on Gay Teen Suicide, Patrick Healy concluded that gay teens are "five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers"(2001).

# What can parents do?

Be aware.

Build relationships.

Know your students.

Communicate.



# What can parents do?

## Take Action

If you have noticed a pattern of behavior in a youth that is consistent with some of the risk factors and warning signs described in previous sections, it is time to take action. Here are some tips on the next steps to take:

- Do not try to play the hero.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Remain calm.
- Be prepared to talk about suicide.
- Do not minimize the situation.
- Be prepared to ACT.
- Don't fall into the "Not My Child Syndrome."

# Resource: Alabama Statistics, 2005 Youth Behavior Risk Survey

This survey covers a broad range of questions concerning behavioral actions and thoughts from our youth. It is surveyed in public schools to Grades 9-12 (some districts choose to include Grades 7-8).

1. Have you felt sad or hopeless almost every day in a row for two weeks or greater so that it affected your usual activities in the past twelve months? - **Nationally 28.5% (Over 1 of every 4); Alabama – 28.5% (same)**
2. Have you seriously considered suicide in the past twelve months? - **Nationally 16.9% (1 of 6); Alabama – 17.1% (same)**
3. Have you made a plan on how to commit suicide in the past twelve months? - **Nationally 13% (1 of 8); Alabama – 15% (1 of 7)**
4. Have you attempted suicide one or more times in the past twelve months? – **Nationally 8.4% (1 of 12); Alabama – 10% (Almost 1 of 10)**

# Resource: Pride Survey

Since 2003 students in grades 6-12 in Alabama schools participate in this behavioral survey annually. While the survey assesses student risk factors to VATODs, it addresses students' alienation to peers and others as a factor for drug use.

(2009 data)

1. Have you been in trouble with the police? –  
**Alabama – 27.9%** (about 1 of 4)
2. Have you thought about committing suicide?  
**Alabama – 14.7%** (about 1 of 7)

# Resource: Jason Foundation Alabama Affiliates

## □ **JFI at Hill Crest Behavioral Health Services**

6869 Fifth Avenue South

Birmingham, AL 35212

Direct Line: (205) 833-9000

Toll Free: 1-877-778-2275

JFI at Laurel

## □ **Oaks Behavioral Services**

700 E. Cottonwood Road

Dothan, AL 36301

Direct Line: (334) 794-7373

Toll Free: 1-877-778-2275

Website: <http://www.laureloaksbhc.com/>

# What can parents do?

**Never** ignore a threat.

If a child is talking about suicide, they are looking for help.

**Take** *all threats seriously.*

Report the information directly to a counselor or an administrator IMMEDIATELY.

As the old saying goes, “It is better to be safe than sorry.”

# Last Thought

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem...



## Remember

“To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.”

[Matt Epling.com](http://MattEpling.com)

# Resources



[http://poverty.suite101.com/print\\_article.cfm/cyber\\_bullying\\_can\\_kill](http://poverty.suite101.com/print_article.cfm/cyber_bullying_can_kill)



# Resources

<http://www.tspn.org>

<http://www.newsfactor.com/story.xhtml?storyid=010000X34SC0>

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/newsletter/spring01/sprng012.html>

# Resources

<http://kidshealth.org>

<http://ptsd.about.com/od/relatedconditions/a/suicide.htm?p=1>

<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/153/6/573>

<http://www.edweek.org>