



## Quick Reference for Youth Suicide Prevention

### Know what to watch for

Suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst youth and young adults. A key part of prevention is for caring adults to know the signs.

- withdrawing from family and friends
- hopelessness about the future
- talking or writing about suicide or wanting to die
- conveying that they are feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or out of control
- good-bye gestures, such as giving important belongings away
- changes in behaviour (decline in school performance, acting out, risk-taking, etc.)
- problematic substance use
- inattention to hygiene
- negative mood or signs of depression (sadness, irritability, less enjoyment of previously enjoyed activities, difficulty sleeping or eating)

### Know what to say

Raising the topic of suicide with your child will make it easier for them to confide in you if they are having trouble in this area. Here are some ways to approach this difficult conversation:

- **Start the conversation:** Begin gently, by asking how your child or teen is feeling. You might begin with some general observations and questions, like “I’ve noticed you are spending a lot of time in your room and you seem sad. Are you okay?”
- **Listen:** It’s important to give your child or teen a chance to respond to your first question. You might say, “Tell me more about that. It sounds important. I’m starting to understand better.”
- **Ask:** Directly ask about suicide. If your child says “no”, trust your instincts and follow up if needed.
- **Respond:** If your child says ‘Yes’, stay calm and reassure them that you will help them through this.

### Know what to do if you are concerned

- Educate yourself on local services that can help: [ConnexOntario](#) 1-866-531-2600  
[Children’s Mental Health Ontario](#)  
Click the link to find a centre in your area
- Consult with your family doctor, cultural/faith leader, for additional support
- Work with your child’s school to create daily supports. Caring professionals are there to help
- Prioritize your own wellness so you can be there for your child or teen. Visit [Wellness Together Canada](#) for ideas and supports
- Try to make time for connection and low stress activities with your child or teen each day
- Remember, suicidal thoughts can happen to anyone and when you provide direct, caring support you can truly help your child or teen

### Know what to do in a crisis

**If your child or teen has a realistic suicide plan and intends to act on it right away or has already made an attempt, this is a mental health emergency. Do not leave your child or teen alone. Immediately contact Crisis Services Canada 1.833.456.4566, go to the emergency room of your local hospital, or call for an ambulance.**

### Help is available for suicide crisis and prevention:

Black Youth Helpline  
1-833-294-8650 (9am-10pm)

[Crisis Services Canada](#)  
1-833-456-4566 (24/7) or text 45645 (4pm-12am)

[Kids Help Phone](#)  
1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

[First Nations Hope for Wellness Help Line](#)  
1-855-242-3310 or click the link to chat.

Naseeha ([naseeha.org](#)) 1-866-627-3342  
Trans Lifeline 1-877-330-6366

[Distress and Crisis Ontario](#)  
Click the link to chat.

Or contact a telephone distress line for your area

**Parents, families to learn more about your important role in suicide prevention, view the full document:**

[Prepare; Prevent; Respond : A suicide prevention guide for parents and families during COVID-19 and return to school](#)

