



February 23, 2018,

The Solano County Office of Education and Solano County Behavioral Health work in collaboration to increase mental health awareness, and to prevent youth suicides, bullying, and incidents of violence in schools. In preparation for the pending release of season 2 of a popular Netflix television series *13 Reasons Why*, and in light of the recent school shooting in Florida, this informational notice has been developed to assist school personnel, parents, and students with how to identify risk factors for untreated mental health concerns, suicide risk, and the potential for violence.

Because 1 in 5 youth between the ages of 13-18 have a serious mental health condition, proactively seeking early intervention is vital to prevent a mental health condition from becoming disabling.

WARNING SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Personality changes
- Loss of interest in hobbies/activities
- Changes in eating/sleeping
- Sudden mood swings (sadness/anger)
- Withdrawals from family and friends
- Hopelessness
- Reckless behavior
- Increased anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Changes in appearance (neglecting hygiene)
- Giving away belongings
- Talking about not wanting to be here or expressing a wish to die

It is important to seek help immediately if you notice your child, or a student has demonstrated any of the above signs. There is treatment available, and, with support, many mental health conditions can be treated and resolved. As a community, we need to collectively combat mental health stigma and encourage our friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbors to seek support. **It is important to recognize that the majority of individuals suffering from a mental health condition do not pose a risk to others, in spite of what the media may portray when there is a traumatic event.** Additionally, it is imperative that efforts continue to be made to put an end to the culture of bullying in our schools and on social media as this can further isolate someone who is already suffering.

Last school year, a Netflix series entitled *13 Reasons Why* (13RW) increased national and local attention around subjects related to mental health, bullying, sexual assault, trauma, and suicide. The show has become very popular among youth, as the series focuses on the trials and tribulations experienced amongst teenagers. The show is intended for mature audiences as the content can be graphic at times, including the depiction of sexual assault and the act of suicide. It is important to be aware that season 1 was filmed locally in the city of Vallejo and in Marin County, and season 2—which is due to be released on March 30, 2018—was also filmed locally in Vallejo and Martinez. As such, the series was widely viewed by Solano County youth and appeared to have had a negative impact on many of the youth that watched the show resulting in increased calls to suicide hotlines, increased suicide attempts, and youth being

emotionally destabilized. While season 1 of the 13RW was largely focused on the suicide of the main character, season 2 is focused on a school shooting.

As a community, it is imperative that we are proactive in supporting our students and families to discuss such topics in a safe environment. Below are a few suggested talking points adapted from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) and the Jed Foundation that were released in response to the *13 Reasons Why* television series:

Talking Points for 13RW – Season 1

- If you have watched the show and feel like you need support or someone to talk to – reach out. Talk with a friend, family member, counselor, or therapist.
- Suicide [and violent acts] are NOT a common response to life's challenges or difficulties. The vast majority of people who experience bullying, the death of a friend, or any other adversity described in 13RW do not die by suicide [or commit a violent act]. In fact, most reach out, talk to others, seek help, or find other productive ways of coping.
- Talking openly and honestly about emotional distress and suicide is okay. It will not make someone more suicidal or put the idea of suicide in their mind. If you are concerned about someone, ask them about it.
- When you die you do not get to make a movie or talk to people any more. Leaving messages from beyond the grave is a dramatization produced in Hollywood and is not possible in real life.
- It is recommended that parents watch the television series either before their child watches it, or watch the show with their child.

The complete list of talking points can be found in English and Spanish at <https://www.save.org/blog/tips-watching-new-netflix-series-13-reasons/>.

It is a fact that the majority of people who live with a mental health condition are non-violent, and those who carry out mass shootings oftentimes have not been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition or are not involved with treatment. The following warning signs of a mass shooting were adapted from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE):

Warning Signs of a Potential for a Mass Shooting

The individual:

- Is observed engaging in surveillance behaviors (casing a scene)
- Makes explicit verbal or written threats about plans to harm or kill others, including communications on social media sites
- Expresses admiration or identification with another perpetrator of violence
- Engages in online searches for weapons and is obsessed with acquiring large quantities of guns and/or weapons
- Expresses fantasies or thoughts of engaging in shootings and other violent behaviors

If school personnel, parents, or students become aware of an individual — youth or adult — who may be at risk for violence, it is imperative that steps are taken to get that person the help they need. This may include:

- Students talking to their parents, teacher, counselor, or other school personnel.
- Referring the individual for a mental health evaluation or counseling.
- Notifying authorities, including law enforcement, that the individual may be in possession of weapons.
- Engaging the parent or family to increase the individual's support system.
- Reduce access to firearms by ensuring that all guns and ammunition are locked in secure lock boxes. If a family member appears depressed, has discussed having suicidal thoughts, and/or demonstrates in interest in guns and violence it is strongly recommended that the gun owner make arrangements to store firearms and ammunition outside of the home. Many local gun shops provide firearm storage, and local police departments will also take temporary possession of firearms to ensure safety of the community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about the content of this informational notice please contact Solano County Mental Health Administration at (707) 784-8320 or the Solano County Office of Education at (707) 399-4436 or (707) 399-4855.

If you believe that a child or adult is at risk of or experiencing a mental health condition and/or is at risk of suicide or harming others, please consider contacting additional resources listed on page 4 of this informational notice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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| <i>Solano County Behavioral Health Access Line</i> | Screening and linkage to Mental Health Services | (707) 547-0495 |
| <i>Solano County Behavioral Health Crisis Stabilization Unit</i> | 24/7 Crisis Services located at 2101 Courage Drive, Fairfield | (707) 428-1131 |
| <i>National Suicide Prevention Hotline</i> | 24/7 suicide prevention hotline staffed by crisis specialists | 1 (800) 273 –TALK (8255) |
| <i>Crisis Text Line</i> | 24/7 suicide prevention texting crisis service staffed by crisis specialists | Text “HELLO” or “START” to 741741 |
| <i>MY3 Phone App</i> | This app can be downloaded on iPhones and Androids can be used to create safety plans, prompt coping strategies, and support systems when having thoughts of suicide | www.my3app.org |
| <i>The Trevor Project</i> | Crisis intervention and suicide prevention for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth | http://www.thetrevorproject.org ; (866) 488-7386 |
| <i>American Foundation for Suicide Prevention</i> | National suicide prevention awareness efforts | https://afsp.org/ |
| <i>“Seize the Awkward” Campaign`</i> | A national campaign for how to talk to a friend who may have mental health needs | seizetheawkward.org |
| <i>California Know the Signs Campaign</i> | Raises awareness about suicide prevention strategies | www.suicideispreventable.org |
| <i>California Each Mind Matters Campaign</i> | Stigma reduction awareness and resources regarding mental health for individuals and families | www.eachmindmatters.org |
| <i>RAINN</i> | Nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization | www.RAINN.org https://Safehelpline.org Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673) |
| <i>Suicide Awareness Voices of Education</i> | Raises public awareness about suicide prevention locally, at the state level, and nationally | https://save.org |
| <i>Stopbullying.gov</i> | Raises awareness about bullying and resources | https://www.stopbullying.gov/ |