

Fast Facts and Myths about Suicide

Fast Facts

- Between 2002 and 2006 there were 536 suicides of young people ages 10-24; an average of more than 2 deaths per week.
- Youth suicides outnumber (by nearly two times) youth homicides in Washington State.
- Between 2002 and 2006 there were 4,362 hospitalizations of young people ages 10-24 as a result of non-fatal suicidal behavior – nearly 17 hospitalizations per week.
- Over 30% of 10th graders indicated on the 2006 Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) that they felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks that they stopped doing their usual activities.
- On the same survey, 15% of 10th graders indicated that they had seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months and 11.9% indicated that they had made a plan about they would kill themselves.
- Over 30% of the 10th graders on the Healthy Youth Survey responded “no” or “not sure” when asked if there were adults they could turn to if they were feeling sad or hopeless.
- Less than one half of the HYS respondents had seen or heard information at their school about youth suicide prevention.
- A 50% reduction in our current rates of youth suicide behaviors would save approximately \$12 million dollars in hospital-based health care expenses.

Myths about Suicide

Myth: A youth threatening suicide is really not serious about completing suicide.

Fact: Those youth who talk about suicide or exhibit suicidal behaviors are serious suicide risks. As a friend, parent or professional caregiver, it is better to overestimate the risk of suicide and intervene than to ignore or minimize the behaviors.

Myth: Suicide cannot be prevented because, somehow, a suicidal youth will find a way to do it.

Fact: The majority of the time youth who kill themselves have given definite signs or talked about suicide. The keys to prevention are recognizing the warning signs and knowing what to do to help. Remember that most suicidal youth do not really want to die, they just want their pain to end.

Myth: Talking about suicide will cause someone to attempt suicide.

Fact: Talking about suicide does not create or increase risk; it actually reduces it. If you have observed any of the warning signs, chances are the youth is already thinking about suicide. Be direct in a caring, non-confrontational way; ask the question, "are you thinking about suicide?" Open talk and genuine concern are a source of relief and key elements in preventing the immediate danger of suicide.