

Suicide Prevention

Colquitt County School System

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

---Dr. Leo Buscaglia

Acknowledging that suicide is a serious risk for young people is an important step in prevention. The purpose of providing this information is to help staff and community members understand

- The scope of the problem
- The risk factors for suicide
- What we can do to help

Purpose

"Every school in our district had a crisis plan if a staff member died of cancer or a student got in a car accident. But suicide...it wasn't on my agenda. We just did not think it was going to happen here. Unfortunately we learned the hard way. It was only after we had a suicide in our school that we realized we needed to take a comprehensive approach to preventing a tragedy like this. And we realized we needed to involve everybody—the school staff, students, parents, and the community."

*--Superintendent in a New England
School District*

1. Maintaining a safe school environment is part of a school's overall mission. Suicide prevention is consistent with other efforts to protect student safety, such as bullying prevention, preventing drug/alcohol abuse, fostering student connectedness with school and graduation.

Reasons Why Schools Should Address Suicide

2. Students mental health can affect their academic performance. Depression and other mental health issues can interfere with the ability to learn and affect academic performance.

Reasons Why Schools Should Address Suicide

3. A student suicide can significantly impact other students and the entire school community. Adolescents can be susceptible to suicide contagion (the copycat effect).

Reasons Why Schools Should Address Suicide

4. Schools have been sued for negligence in dealing with the issue of suicide:
- Failure to notify parents if their child appears to be suicidal
 - Failure to get assistance for a student at risk of suicide
 - Failure to adequately supervise a student at risk

Reasons Why Schools Should Address Suicide

- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults (ages 15–24).
- From 2007 - 2009, the number and rate of youth suicide (Ages 10 -18) in Georgia doubled.
- In 2010, suicide deaths of 10-14 year olds was the highest and more than two times the average of the past 17 years.
- Girls attempt suicide two times as often as boys.
- The suicide death rate for boys is four times that of girls.

Statistics

513,909 Georgia students in 6th -12th grade completed the survey.

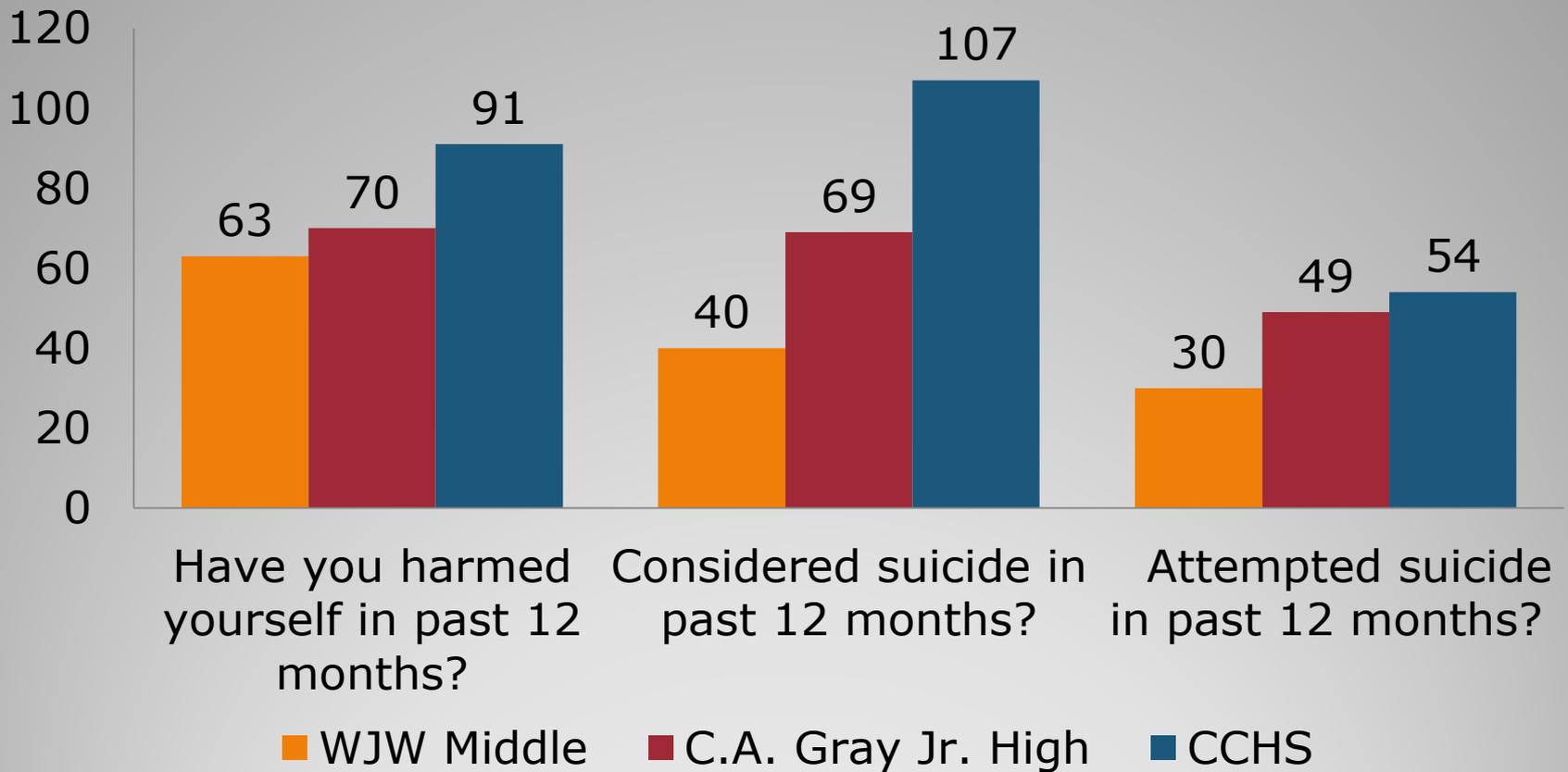
- 26,381 reported they had attempted suicide in the last 12 months (5% of students completing survey)
- 46,266 reported they had seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months (9.0%)

2012-13 Georgia Student Health Survey

2611 Colquitt County students completed the survey.

- 136 reported they had attempted suicide in the last 12 months (5% of students completing survey)
- 216 reported they had seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months (8.3%)

**2012-13 Georgia Student
Health Survey**



Colquitt County Student Responses on 12-13 Health Survey

Students in Grades 6 -12	State Percentage	Colquitt County Percentage
I feel unsafe at school.	11.5	13.0
I don't have an adult at school I can talk to if I need help.	24.9	22.7
I have been bullied at least once in the past 30 days.	14.7	17.5
I have thought about dropping out of school.	22.2	27.2
I have used alcohol in the past 30 days.	12.3	16.8
I have used marijuana in the past 30 days	7.9	10.2

More From the Health Survey



“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.”

-- Theodor Seuss Geisel

Feelings:

- Hopelessness-feeling like things are bad now and they won't get any better
- Fear of losing control, going crazy, harming yourself or others.
- Helplessness- a belief that there's nothing you – or anybody- can do to make your life better
- Worthlessness- feeling like an awful person and that people would be better off if you were dead
- Hating yourself, feeling guilty or ashamed
- Being extremely sad and lonely
- Feeling anxious or worried or angry all the time

Know the FACTS-Warning Signs of Suicide

From: Society of Prevention of Teen Suicide

Actions:

- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- Talking or writing about death or destruction.
- Aggression – getting into fights or having arguments with people
- Recklessness- doing risky or dangerous things.

Know the FACTS-Warning Signs of Suicide

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Changes:

- Personality- behaving like a different person- becoming withdrawn, tired all the time, not caring about anything, or more talkative, outgoing.
- Behavior-can't concentrate on school, regular tasks.
- Sleeping pattern-sleeping all the time or not being able to sleep at all, or waking up in the middle of the night or early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep
- Eating habits-losing appetite and or overeating and gaining weight.
- Losing interest in friends, hobbies, and the way you look or in activities or sports you previously enjoyed.
- Sudden improvement after a period of being down or withdrawn.

Know the FACTS-Warning Signs of Suicide

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Threats:

- Statements- like “How long does it take to bleed to death?”
- Threats- “ I won’t be around much longer.” Or “Don’t tell anyone else...you won’t be my friend if you tell!”
- Plans- giving away favorite things, studying about ways to die, obtaining a weapon or a stash of pills- ***the risk is very high if a person has a plan and the means to carry it out!!
- Suicide attempts- overdosing, wrist cutting.

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Situations:

- Getting into trouble at school, at home or with the law
- Recent loss- through death, divorce or separation, the break-up of a relationship, losing an opportunity or a dream; losing self-esteem
- Changes in your life that you feel you can't cope with
- Being exposed to suicide or the death of a peer under any circumstances

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All concerns about a student at risk or threats of suicide should be taken seriously, and the protocol should be followed. Every staff member should be aware of the protocol. The threat may be verbalized to another student, a teacher, another staff member or the counselor. Regardless of who hears it, the consideration of suicide should be reported to a counselor or administrator.

Colquitt County Schools Protocol in the Event of a Threat of Suicide

1. If the student has communicated the threat to a teacher or other staff member, that person should accompany the student to the counselor's office. Therefore, someone will need to cover the teacher's class.
2. The teacher/staff member should remain in the counselor's office until the counselor has the opportunity to get necessary information about the exact nature of the threat.
3. The counselor speaks with the student and assesses the situation. It is not the role of the school counselor to assess the seriousness of the threat but whether, in fact, the threat was made.
4. The counselor shares the assessment with the building principal.
5. The student is not left alone during this time, but with a staff person.
6. Principal or counselor contacts parents.
7. Student must be turned over to care of parents as soon as possible.
8. Student should not return to school without documentation of assessment by a mental health professional.

Colquitt County Schools Protocol in the Event of a Threat of Suicide