

CMHA's Suicide Prevention Program

Signals of Suicide is one of a number of initiatives coordinated by CMHA's Suicide Prevention Program. This program area coordinates suicide prevention, intervention and postvention efforts that strengthen supports and enhance resiliency in Island communities. Other initiatives include:

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): A two-day suicide intervention workshop for community caregivers. The ASIST workshop is designed to increase caregivers' knowledge, comfort level and confidence to respond to a person at risk of suicide. It is the most widely used, acclaimed and researched training of its kind in the world.

The PEI Helping Tree: Reaching out for help is a critical step in suicide prevention. The *PEI Helping Tree* is a user-friendly chart designed to inform Islanders of the many helping resources available throughout Prince Edward Island.

Supports for Survivors of Suicide (Loss) : Each person that dies by suicide leaves behind a network of family and close friends who must cope with the loss and the complicated grief that follows. We provide *Grief After Suicide* brochures and *Survivors of Suicide Information Kits* upon request and can direct suicide survivors to other support options for families coping with the aftermath of suicide.

PEI's Suicide Prevention Committee: This committee was established in 2003 to coordinate initiatives and projects in an effort to reduce the suicide rate and lessen the impact of suicide on PEI.

Stick to Life: This public awareness campaign was launched on World Suicide Prevention Day, 2008. It is a washroom sticker campaign targeting working-aged men - encouraging them to seek help when in distress or crisis. For more information, go to www.StickToLife.ca.

Other Resources: CMHA's Suicide Prevention Program can provide individuals, families and organizations with other helpful resources relating to suicide prevention. We endeavor to link people with resources and community supports that meet their individual needs.

For more information, please contact our Suicide Prevention Coordinator at (902) 628-3669 or suicideprevention@cmha.pe.ca

Multi-media resources such as books, videos, DVDs, and brochures are available through our libraries in Charlottetown, Summerside and Alberton. Contact CMHA's Consumer & Family Support Program (1 800 682-1648) for details.

ADDITIONAL:

New resources are added and/or updated regularly. Please contact one of the following CMHA Offices for more information:

Canadian Mental Health Association PEI Division

178 Fitzroy Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7L9
Web page: www.cmha.pe.ca

CMHA/PEI Division.....902 566-3034
CMHA East Prince902 436-7399
CMHA West Prince902 853-4180

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MEDAVIE HEALTH FOUNDATION

Signals Of Suicide

A Comprehensive Youth Suicide Prevention Program



Photos courtesy of the Vancouver Crisis Centre



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Prince Edward Island
Mental health for all

The Facts . . .

In Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth aged 10-24. On average, 294 youth take their own lives each year and for every suicide, there are many more attempts.

Current research indicates that comprehensive school-based suicide prevention programs have the potential to reduce youth suicide rates. It also suggests that a majority of youth reach out to a close friend first when they have a problem, and to adults second, if at all. While a peer may be able to relate better, they may not have the knowledge, skills or resources to help a friend move beyond a suicidal crisis.

SOS empowers youth to be more effective helpers: they learn how to recognize a person at risk of suicide and the steps to take to help their friend get the support they need to stay alive.

“It’s an issue that needs to be talked about regularly in our schools”.

Teacher, École Évangéline

Our Goals . . .

The first goal of the S.O.S. Program is to change the attitudes surrounding suicide that make it difficult to talk about and, therefore, difficult to prevent. The second goal is to teach youth how to recognize the signals of suicide and how to reach out to a youth sending these signals.

The S.O.S. Program is presented by a trained facilitator to students in the various school regions across the province. By combining interactive learning techniques with a short video, the 75-minute workshop safely explores suicide prevention with youth aged 14 to 19 years.

S.O.S. Messages . . .

Suicide is preventable:

- Suicide is not about death - it is about stopping emotional pain. Many would choose to live if they could find another way to deal with the situation.
- Most suicidal individuals invite help by sending signals to friends or family.

We can all learn to recognize signals and to reach out and help a youth at risk of suicide:

- If a friend has changed in ways that suggest they’re in distress or in crisis, it’s ok to ask directly about thoughts of suicide.
- It’s ok to talk about problems, feelings and about suicide.
- We can connect them to the kinds of help they need.

Reaching out can be challenging for a helper:

- Sometimes telling a friend’s secret is necessary to keep them alive.
- Helping a suicidal friend can be hard-make sure we are taken care of, too. Get support from trusted adults.
- Be proud for whatever help we’re able to give a friend. How they respond to that help is their decision.

Who We Are . . .

The Canadian Mental Health Association/PEI Division (CMHA), a non-profit mental health agency, has chosen the *Signals of Suicide* (S.O.S.) Program as a proven strategy in youth suicide prevention. The program’s major funding contributors are the Department of Health and CMHA’s Annual “Golf for Life” Tournament.

“Emotional, but effective. A program like this saves lives!”

Student, Souris Regional High

About the Program . . .

The S.O.S. Program helps youth understand:

- that youth suicide is a problem that we can do something about
- the signals that indicate potential distress
- the steps to help (Ask, Listen, Seek Help)
- the challenges a peer helper may face, how to take care of themselves and the limits of their responsibility
- that there are resources in our communities that can help a young person move beyond suicidal crisis

“Excellent Program – the video was so real. Every youth should see this.”

Parent, M.E. Callaghan Intermediate

“It’s reassuring to know that you are out there talking to kids about this important issue.”

Social Worker, Summerside

We also . . .

Ensure S.O.S. is responsive to youth and community needs by:

- working in partnership with other professional and community services to confirm resources specific to each community and to be proactive in the event of disclosures
- providing SOS Helpcards to students, which outline the suicide prevention resources and crisis lines available across PEI.
- offering community information sessions and supplementary resources developed specifically for parents and educators.

“It helped me decide what to do with a friend.”

Grade 9 Student, Belfast Consolidated