



Warrensburg High School

1411 S. Ridgeview Drive
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Bret Pummill, Principal
Keith Chapman, Activities Director

Sara Kenepp-Chapman, Assistant Principal
Holly Jennings, Assistant Principal

April 12, 2021

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for students and their parents. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide.

To proactively address this, Warrensburg High School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention education as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program encourages students to seek help if they are concerned about themselves or a friend. The SOS Program is the only youth suicide prevention program that has demonstrated an improvement in students' knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, as well as a reduction in actual suicide attempts. Listed on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, the SOS Program has shown a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64% in randomized control studies (Aseltine et al., 2007; Schilling et al., 2016).

Our goals in participating in this program include:

- to help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- to explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
- to provide students education on how to identify serious depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- to impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a trusted adult about their concerns
- to teach students who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Warrensburg High School will be implementing the SOS Program for students on April 20. All students will complete a depression screening, and may be asked to speak with a counselor based on the results of their screening. Students will also have an opportunity to request to follow up with an adult if they have concerns for themselves or a friend. We are also partnering with mental health professionals from outside agencies who will be available at WHS on the day of the program to provide further assessment, as well as resources and referral information for families.

We would encourage parents/guardians to visit <https://sossignsof suicide.org/parent> for additional information regarding the SOS Program.

If you do **NOT** wish your child to participate in the SOS Program in school, please contact WHS Principal, Bret Pummill, at bpummill@warrensburg6.org or 660-747-2262 by **April 16**. If we do not hear from you by **April 16**, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Please note: This will be an in-person only program, but our virtual students are welcome to join us at WHS on April 20. We will need any virtual student to email Dr. Pummill requesting to attend by April 16.

Sincerely,

Bret Pummill

Bret Pummill, Ed.D.
WHS Principal