

Signs of Suicide Prevention Program



Our Goal

MAMH advocates for mental health education in schools, and some of that education should be around understanding when someone's feelings or thoughts may lead to suicide. One program designed for schools is Signs of Suicide (SOS) Prevention Program.

SOS Prevention Program

The SOS Prevention Program is a school-based depression awareness and suicide prevention program designed for middle and high school students (ages 11-17). It combines curricula to raise awareness of suicide and its related issues with a screening tool for depression and other risk factors associated with suicidal behavior.

The goals of the program are to:

1. Decrease suicide and suicide attempts by increasing student knowledge and adaptive attitudes about depression.
2. Encourage personal help-seeking and/or help-seeking on behalf of a friend.
3. Reduce the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of seeking help or treatment.
4. Engage parents and school staff as partners in prevention through "gatekeeper" education.
5. Encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health.

The curriculum is focused on promoting the concept that suicide is directly related to mental illness and that suicide is not an expected reaction to stress or upsetting emotions. Students are taught to recognize the signs of suicide and depression in themselves and others. They are also taught to ACT—acknowledge, care, and tell—when they recognize a person in need of help.

The curriculum is administered through a video and discussion guide. The video features dramatizations as well as real life interviews that depict some of the signs of suicidality and depression and the recommended way to react to those signs.

The students all complete the Columbia Depression Scale (CDS), a brief screening instrument for depression, and then score it themselves. The attached interpretation sheet encourages students with scores that indicate depression to seek help immediately. Each school is also responsible for providing a description of resources available to students who want to seek assistance.

To learn more about SOS, visit the [MindWise website](#).

Evidence of Program Effectiveness

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center evaluated the SOS Prevention Program for SAMHSA's National Registry for Evidence-based Programs and Practices and found mixed findings of the program's effectiveness.

Overall, the report rated the program as:

- **Promising** for reducing suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- **Promising** for improving knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about mental health.
- **Ineffective** for increasing receipt of mental health and/or substance use treatment.
- **Ineffective** for increasing social competence related to help-seeking behaviors.

For more information, read the [SPRC report](#).