

# LEARN Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention Training

**W** FOREFRONT  
SUICIDE PREVENTION

*Please complete the  
pre-training survey here:*

[https://redcap.link/fis\\_learn\\_pre](https://redcap.link/fis_learn_pre)



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60-90 min Educator/Staff Training

Trainer Name / School

Date of Training

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# Suicide Prevention at our School



# Forefront's Mission

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Forefront Suicide Prevention is a Center of Excellence at the University of Washington.

Our mission is to help people take action to prevent suicide in their communities.



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# Today's in-person training



This training will take approximately [60-90] minutes.



There will be one small group activity.



Questions? Let us know!



# Take care

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This training covers a topic that can be emotionally challenging for many people. Feel free to step out for a moment if you need to take a break.

We encourage you to:

- Respect other views, beliefs, and stories
- Keep any personal information shared today to yourself
- Take care of yourself after this training



# Learning objectives

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1

Explain the public health issue of youth suicide and why young people may consider suicide

2

Identify, understand, and be ready to support someone who may be at risk for suicide

3

Apply the LEARN steps in a practice scenario



# Learning objective 1:

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**Explain the public health issue of suicide and why young people may consider suicide.**





## What we know

Suicide affects all communities

Asking about suicide doesn't cause suicide

Suicide results from multiple complex factors



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# What protects against suicide?

- Connections to friends, family, culture, and community
- Limited access to lethal methods (e.g., firearms, medications)
- Coping and problem-solving skills
- Access to physical and mental health care



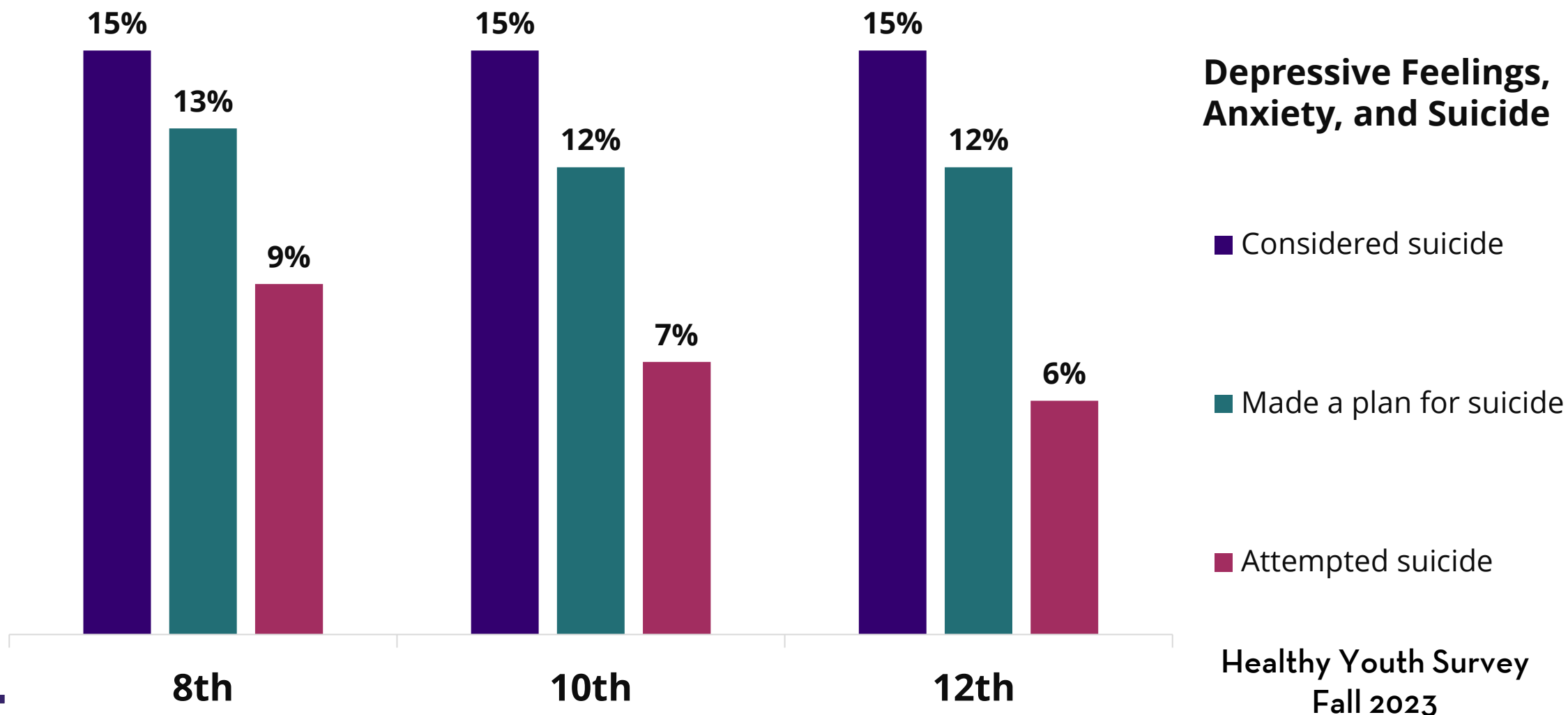
# Youth in the US, 2021

Suicide is the  
2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause  
of death among  
those ages 10-24

Youth suicides  
account for  
15% of all suicides



# What Washington youth are saying



# Suicidal thinking

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Suicide isn't always about  
wanting to die.

**It's about wanting  
to end overwhelming pain.**



A woman with long red hair, wearing a black sleeveless top, is smiling and holding a small object in her hands. She is standing in front of a whiteboard that has some faint writing on it, including the words "GIVE FEEDBACK" and "FEE". The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in the foreground.

# What's my role as an educator?





# Language matters



Instead of saying  
“committed suicide”,  
Let’s say “**died by suicide**”  
or “**took their own life**”





# Learning objective 2:

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**Identify, understand, and be ready to support someone who may be at risk for suicide**

Our model:

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Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps







# Look for signs

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



# Look for warning signs



**Emotions,  
Feelings**

**Actions,  
Behaviors**

**Experiences**



# Look for warning signs



## Emotions, Feelings

- Depression, anxiety
- Anger, irritability, agitation
- Unusual mood swings
- Feeling hopeless/helpless
- Loneliness
- Shame, humiliation
- Emotional/physical pain
- Sudden unexplainable joy after a period of depression

## Actions, Behaviors

- Withdrawing
- Isolating
- Substance use
- Giving away prized possessions
- Acquiring lethal means
- Risky/reckless behavior
- Joking/frequent statements about death
- Self-injury
- Threats against self or others

## Experiences

- Significant life changes or loss
- Bullying, harassment
- Discrimination linked to sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or race/ethnicity
- Personal and/or historical trauma
- Previous suicide attempts or family history of suicide
- Access to lethal means





# Empathize & Listen

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps




# Brené Brown on empathy

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<https://youtu.be/1Ewgu369Jw?si=pt3-HjB-ALJY5OSK>





**A student tells you  
they are struggling.  
Which is the best  
way to demonstrate  
empathy?**

1. Offer solutions to fix the problem – after all, you don't want to see them hurting.

2. Share a story about a time that something similar happened to you.

3. Sit with them and say, "It sounds like you're going through a lot right now."

4. Pull up a funny video on your phone to help cheer them up.





# Components of empathy

**Helpful things to say:**

*I'm so glad you told me.  
Tell me more, I'm listening.*



**Try to see the  
world as others  
see it**



**Be non-  
judgmental**



**Validate  
another's  
feelings**



**Communicate  
understanding**



# Ask about suicide

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



# When do I ask?

- Multiple signs
- Big changes in a person's life or behavior
- When your gut tells you to

**Concerned?  
JUST ASK**

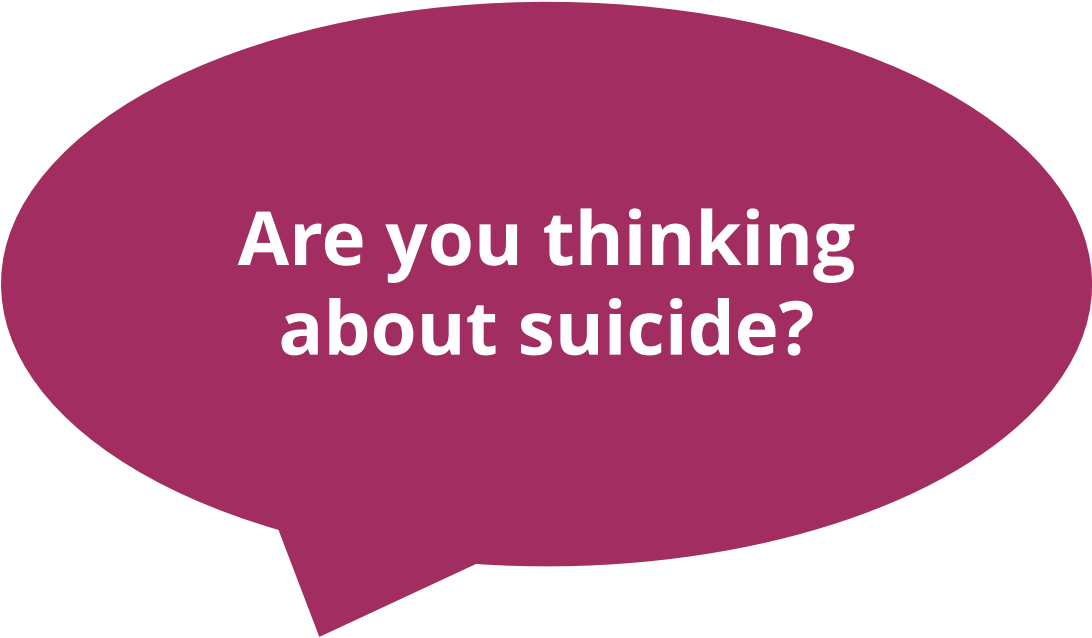




# Ask directly

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- Be courageous and direct
- Avoid vague language



**Are you thinking  
about suicide?**



**Are you thinking  
about killing  
yourself?**



# How do I ask about suicide?



Sometimes when people are...

\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_

they're thinking about suicide.

Are you thinking about  
suicide?

**Insert any warning signs  
you see here!**

## ***Example:***

*"Sometimes when people feel like things don't matter anymore and they're isolating from friends, they're thinking about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?"*



# Let's debrief

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How did it feel  
to say the word  
"suicide?"





# What if they say **no**?

- Stay neutral and non-judgmental
- Let them know you care
- If you are still concerned, gather more information and ask again. If they still say no, ask:  
    *“If you were thinking about suicide, who would you talk to?”*
- Move on to the R and N steps



# What if they say **yes**?

- Stay neutral and non-judgmental
- Take it seriously
- Thank them for their honesty
- Acknowledge the pain they are in
- Move on to the R and N steps
- Get support for yourself next



**They ask you not to tell anyone. How can you respond?**





# IF THEY SAY YES

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[https://youtu.be/0lDdljKb\\_hM](https://youtu.be/0lDdljKb_hM)

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Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps

# Reduce the danger



# Important follow up questions



Have you  
thought about  
how you might  
end your life?

Do you have  
access to those  
methods?

Have you  
thought about  
when you  
might do this?

**Remember:** Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and the methods they may use can save their life!

# Locking and limiting access



## Firearms

- *Lock up all firearms, including those used for home defense*
- **Limit Access:**
  - Youth should not have unsupervised access to firearms

## Medications

- *Lock up most medications – prescription and over-the-counter*
- **Limit Access:**
  - Keep a week's supply available
  - Keep only 1-day dose unlocked during mental health crisis

## In your own home

- **Lock up today:**
  - Firearms
  - Prescription medications
  - Over-the-counter medications
- **Also lock up in a crisis:**
  - Alcohol and drugs
  - Belts, ropes, plastic bags
  - Knives, sharps, car keys
  - Chemicals, pesticides



Want to learn more? Visit  
[saferhomescoalition.org](https://saferhomescoalition.org)

SAFER HOMES  
SUICIDE AWARE



# The **R**step at school

Creating a safe learning environment includes:

- Reduce dangers in the school environment – lock up and monitor
- Follow school crisis plans and protocols
- Report safety concerns immediately







## Next steps

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



# Next steps to take

## Use a warm handoff immediately

- **Never leave a student in crisis alone**
- Relay as much information as possible
- Personally connect them to a counselor/crisis team member
  - If possible, explain the situation with the student present
- Follow crisis plan protocols



# Helpful resources in a crisis



## Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

- Press 1 for veteran services
- Oprima 2 para español
- Press 3 for the Trevor Project
- Press 4 for Native and Strong in Washington



Download more  
resources here!

## Crisis Text Line:

**Text "HEAL" to 741741**

- Mande AYUDA para español

## Trans Lifeline:

**1-877-565-8860**

## The Trevor Project:

**1-866-488-7386**





# Learning objective 3:

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**Apply the LEARN steps in a practice scenario.**



# The LEARN Conversation

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# The LEARN Conversation

What warning signs were concerning?

How was empathy displayed in the video?

How did they ask directly about suicide?

How did they address removing and reducing danger?

What next steps were taken?



# Practicing the LEARN steps



## Meet Alex

Alex is withdrawing and isolating from friends (*and family*); including increased absences at school.  
Alex is struggling with the increased demands of school and a part-time job and is easily overwhelmed lately.  
(*Alex also has easy access to large quantities of medication.*)



Partner up &  
choose roles



Practice the  
LEARN steps



Change roles  
after 4  
minutes



Download  
the full  
exercise  
here:





# How did it go?

1. What did you notice or experience as you practiced each role?
2. How did it feel to say the word suicide?





# Review: Learning objectives

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1

Explain the public health issue of youth suicide and why young people may consider suicide

2

Identify, understand, and be ready to support someone who may be at risk for suicide

3

Apply the LEARN steps in a practice scenario

# Action steps you can take today



**Use what  
you've learned  
to reach out to  
someone in  
distress**



**Say "died by  
suicide"**



**Add 24-hour  
crisis resources  
into your  
phone**



**Make your  
community  
safer to help  
prevent suicide**

# School and community resources

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# Thank you!

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*Please complete the post-training survey:*

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   inthe forefrontwa

Questions? Concerns?  
Email [ffront@uw.edu](mailto:ffront@uw.edu)

# Citations



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- Bailey E, Spittal MJ, Pirkis J, Gould M, Robinson J. Universal Suicide Prevention in Young People. Crisis. 2017;38(5):300-308. doi:10.1027/0227-5910/a000465

## What Protects Against Suicide?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Risk and Protective Factors, Violence Prevention. Published September 6, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/riskprotectivefactors.html>

## What Washington Youth are Saying

- Data from HYS 2021- WASHINGTON: Anxiety, Depression, Suicidal Feelings and Action

## Suicidal Thinking

- Van Orden KA, Witte TK, Cukrowicz KC, Braithwaite SR, Selby EA, Joiner TE Jr. The interpersonal theory of suicide. Psychol Rev. 2010 Apr;117(2):575-600. doi: 10.1037/a0018697. PMID: 20438238; PMCID: PMC3130348.

## Look for Warning Signs

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Warning Signs for Suicide. Suicide Prevention Resource Center. Accessed February 2, 2022. <https://www.sprc.org/about-suicide/warning-signs>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Risk and Protective Factors, Violence Prevention. Published September 6, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/riskprotectivefactors.html>
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- <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/stigma-and-discrimination.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/substance-use/index.htm>
- <http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/resources.html>

## Hidden Warning Signs

- Skerrett P. Suicide Often Not Preceded by Warnings. Harvard Health Blog. Published September 24, 2012. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/suicide-often-not-preceded-by-warnings-201209245331>

## Components of Empathy

- Wiseman T. A concept analysis of empathy. J Adv Nurs. 1996;23:1162-1167. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1996.12213.x

## What's In Your Home?

- Drugfree.org/newsroom
- <https://hiprc.org/3interventionstoolkit/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3553495/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6519a7.htm>

## Make Your Home Safer

- Drapeau CW, McIntosh JL. U.S.A. Suicide: 2020 Official Final Data. Suicide Awareness Voices of Education; 2021. <https://save.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2020datapgs1a-3.pdf>
- Gummin DD, Mowry JB, Beuhler MC, et al. 2020 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS): 38th Annual Report. Clin Toxicol. 2021;59(12):1282-1501. doi:10.1080/15563650.2021.1989785