Suicide Prevention for African American College Students

African American students, like all college student populations, are at risk for suicide.

Historically, the African American population has had one of the lowest rates of suicide.

However, the suicide rate for African American college age males has more than doubled in recent years.

African American college students report a very low use of counseling services. They report being worried about:

- Stigma and prejudice
- Over-pathologizing by mental health professionals
- Concerns that family members, peers, or professors might learn that they sought counseling help.

“Suicide Hotline:
614-221-5445 (Columbus Area)
1-800-273-TALK (National/Veteran)
Emergency Services: 911

The Ohio State University Resources
Provides:
- Urgent appointments M-F for students in crisis.
- Referrals for counseling at all OSU Regional Campuses.
- Confidential services for OSU students and spouses/partners.

The Emergency Department at the OSU Medical Center (OSUMC ED) 614-293-8333

The Student Health Services 614-292-4321
- Health care services to students.

The Student Advocacy Center 614-292-1111
- Helps students navigate problems at OSU

The Student Wellness Center (SWC) 614-292-4527
- Helps with wellness and financial concerns

The Ohio State University Facts:
OSU students reported
91% feeling overwhelmed
74% feeling very sad
59% feeling hopeless
17% experiencing depression
12% experiencing an anxiety disorder
7% seriously considered suicide

Nearly 1% of OSU students attempt suicide.

Tragically, only 26 percent of students surveyed reported that they were currently receiving the help that they need.

The mission of the OSU CSPP and Reach Campaign is to decrease the number of completed suicides on campus and increase mental health seeking behavior.

REACH: To Save a Life
R - Recognize and respond to warning signs;
E - Empathize and engage in discussion;
A - Act by asking the suicide question;
C - Connect and convey hope with treatment;
H - Help them get to help.

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KNOW THE SUICIDE RISKS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS:

Suicide Risk Increases when African American students experience:
• Isolation from family or spiritual community
• Prejudice, racial tension, or discrimination
• A recent loss (e.g., death or break-up)

Suicide Risk Increases with:
• Concerns about mental health stigma
• Experiences of hopelessness and helplessness
• Conflict with others or feeling misunderstood
• Behaviors that are impulsive or aggressive

Suicide Risk Increases when there is a:
• History of family depression and/or suicide
• History of abuse
• History of previous suicide attempts
• Mental health problem that is untreated e.g., depression, bipolar disorder, or anxiety

Suicide Risk Increases when the African American student has access to:
• Firearms or other lethal methods

KNOW THE SUICIDE RISK WARNING SIGNS

An individual may be suicidal if he or she:
• Reports feeling very depressed
• Experiences anxiety and/or stress
• Has increased conflicts with friends, roommates, peers, faculty
• Talks about wanting to commit suicide
• Is focused on death and dying
• Writes about death and/or suicide
• Starts giving away possessions
• Withdraws from family, friends, and activities once enjoyed
• Says things like, “I don’t deserve to be here,” “I wish I were dead,” “I am going to kill myself,” or “I want to die.”
• Increases their use of alcohol and/or other drugs
• Engages in reckless behaviors
• Secures a firearm or other lethal methods

TAKE SUICIDE RISK SERIOUSLY, CONVEY HOPE

Hopefulness is the best defense against suicide. It is always better to overreact than under react.
• Stay calm, listen and accept their feelings.
• Try not to judge or argue.
• Don't act shocked by their plans.
• Be direct. Do not be afraid.
• Be persistent but gentle as you get them to answer your question.

DON’T IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS.
Reach Out: Always Ask.
• Ask them if they are thinking about suicide.
• If you can’t ask, get someone who will ask.

GET HELP, TOGETHER:

Know the resources at OSU and in your community:
• Offer to go with the person for help at:
  OSU CCS (student counseling center): 614-292-5766
  Hospital Emergency Room: 614-293-8333
  Help them call the Suicide Hotline:
  Columbus Area: 1-614-221-5445
  National/Veteran: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  Emergency Services: 911

NEVER LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE, IF POSSIBLE.

Find someone else who can help;
• Family or friends
• Religious leader
• The Counseling Center
• Resident Advisors
• Campus Security

Help them find a reason to live one more day.
There is hope.
There is treatment that helps.

KNOWING ABOUT DEPRESSION HELPS

What is Depression?
• It is a medical problem.
• It can affect anyone at any time.
• You don’t “get over it” or “snap out of it”.
• Like any illness, a person with depression needs professional help.
• It can be successfully treated with appropriate treatment.
• Stress, life events or a combination are triggers.

How does Depression feel? People with depression report that they feel:
• Sadness that lasts longer than a few days or weeks.
• Little or no enjoyment in life;
• Tired much of the time;
• Difficulty concentrating;
• Worthlessness or guilty;
• Hopelessness and despair.

What does Depression look like? Learn to recognize the signs.
• Depressed mood
• Irritability
• Diminished interest in activities
• Difficult falling asleep or sleeping all the time

Common concerns among African American college students who experience depression

Understanding what to look for is helpful:
• Academic problems: Missing classes, not completing assignments, inattentiveness, and/or failing exams and courses.
• Relationship problems: Conflicts with roommates, family, friends, and/or partners, feelings of social isolation, feeling misunderstood
• Engaging in risky behaviors: Violence, unprotected sexual practices, alcohol and other drug abuse, and/or driving under the influence.
• Spiritual disconnection: Loss of faith, alienation from religion due to suicidal thoughts.

Help them find a reason to live one more day.
There is hope.
There is treatment that helps.