

Dear Parents and Students,

One of our most important responsibilities as educators is to promote the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of our students. For this reason, I wanted to share information with you about the recently popular Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*, a show that depicts teen suicide, bullying, rape, drunk driving, and depression with often graphic detail.

The TV series graphically depicts a suicide death and addresses in wrenching detail a number of difficult topics, such as bullying, rape, drunk driving, and slut shaming. The series also highlights the consequences of teenagers witnessing assaults and bullying (i.e., bystanders) and not taking action to address the situation (e.g., not speaking out against the incident, not telling an adult about the incident).

What the series does accurately convey is that there is no single cause of suicide. Indeed, there are likely as many different pathways to suicide as there are suicide deaths. However, the series does not emphasize that common among most suicide deaths is the presence of treatable mental illnesses. Suicide is **not** the simple consequence of stressors or coping challenges, but rather, it is most typically a combined result of treatable mental illnesses and overwhelming or intolerable stressors.

While many youth are resilient and capable of differentiating between a TV drama and real life, engaging in thoughtful conversations with them about the show is vital. Doing so presents an opportunity to help them process the issues addressed, consider the consequences of certain choices, and reinforce the message that **suicide is not a solution to problems** and that help is available. **This is particularly important for adolescents who are isolated, struggling, or vulnerable to suggestive images and storylines.** Thoughtful conversation with teens about this show is critically important to help them process the difficult subject matter. We encourage you to find out whether your child has watched the show, read the book, or heard other students talk about the show. Helping your child process these topics and talk about his/her concerns helps to open an important line of communication that suicide is not a solution and help is available. If your child expresses concerns or you have further questions, our school counseling department, school psychologist, and social worker are resources for you to help engage in these conversations or find support for your child. Our mental health professionals provide support to students, families, and staff in identifying risky behaviors and potential warning signs.

Below are some additional resources that may be helpful:

- 2-1-1 Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Service in CONnecticut
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text "START" to 741741
- [Center for Disease Control Suicide Datasheet](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org
- American Association of Suicidology, www.suicidology.org
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, www.save.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org/>

- www.stopbullying.gov
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org

Please do not hesitate to reach out to school staff in the guidance office if you would like additional support.