

Warning Signs for Suicide Prevention

It is important to know the warning signs for suicide. The more signs a person exhibits, the greater their possible risk for suicide. 'Warning signs' are associated with suicide, but may not be what causes a suicide. The following warning signs were developed by a group of experts in the field of suicide, working with the American Association of Suicidology. The group defines 'warning signs' as **the earliest detectable signs that indicate heightened risk for suicide in the near-future**, compared to risk factors which suggest longer-term risk.

Warning Signs for Suicide and Corresponding Actions (SPRC/AFSP Best Practices Registry May 2007)

Call 9-1-1 or seek immediate help from a mental health provider when you hear or see any one of these behaviors:

- Someone threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Someone looking for ways to kill themselves: seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means
- Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide

Seek help by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for a referral should you witness, hear, or see anyone exhibiting any one or more of these behaviors:

- Hopelessness
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped—like there is no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family or society
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep, or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic mood changes
- No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

Do's and Don'ts

- ⇒ DON'T be afraid to talk about suicide. You cannot plant the idea of suicide in someone's head if they weren't already thinking about it.
- ⇒ DO take threats about suicide seriously.
- ⇒ DO pay attention to changes in mood and behavior.
- ⇒ DON'T ignore warning signs, and DON'T be afraid to talk about changes that you observe
- ⇒ DO make sure that access to items that might be lethal, such as guns and medicines, are locked away.

Deschutes County encourages persons with disabilities to participate in all programs and activities. To request this information in an alternate format please call (541) 330-4640, or send email to anna.johnson@deschutes.org.

