



Chaparral Middle School

March 14, 2022

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The Adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions, difficult for students, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression, which is one of the most treatable of all mental disorders, is a leading risk factor for suicide (helpguide.com). Most students do not experience depression or have suicidal thoughts. However, self-injury, signs and symptoms of depression in teens has become a growing problem among today's students. While teen depression is more prevalent in girls, teenage boys have their own special risk factors and warning signs, (Psychology Today, 2002 – reviewed 2016).

Alamogordo Public Schools is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training to students through the SOS (Signs of Suicide) once in middle school and once in high school. Suicide Prevention Program (SOS) is a evidenced based, universal, school-based depression awareness and suicide prevention program designed for middle school or high-school students. Thousands of schools nationwide have been using this program since 2000. This research-based program is promising for reducing suicidal thoughts and behavior and improving knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about mental health (SAMHSA). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 5,000 young people between grades 7 and 12-attempt suicide each day, making it the second leading cause of death for teens, behind accidents. Four out of five of these teens, the CDC reports, give clear warning signs. (Psychotherapy Networker, 2017).

While it might seem that recognizing depression is easy, the signs are not always obvious. For one, teens with depression do not necessarily appear sad. Irritability, anger, and agitation may be the most prominent symptoms (www.helpguide.org).

Signs and symptoms of depression in teens

1. Sadness or hopelessness
2. Irritability, anger, or hostility
3. Tearfulness or frequent crying
4. Withdrawal from friends and family
5. Loss of interest in activities
6. Poor school performance
7. Changes in eating and sleeping habits
8. Restlessness and agitation
9. Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
10. Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
11. Fatigue or lack of energy
12. Difficulty concentrating
13. Unexplained aches and pains
14. Thoughts of death or suicide



Chaparral Middle School

Is it depression or teenage “growing pains”? A certain amount of moodiness and acting out is par for the course with teens. Nevertheless, persistent changes in personality, mood, or behavior are red flags of a deeper problem. If you are unsure if your student is depressed or just “being a teenager,” consider how long the symptoms have been going on, how severe they are, and how different your student is acting from his or her usual self (helpguide.org).

SOS Program goals 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, and 5) encourage schools to develop community-based partnerships to support student mental health (SAMHSA). Upon completion of the SOS program, students will have awareness when there are signs of a problem in themselves or a peer, show that they care and are concerned about getting help for themselves or peers, and to tell a trusted adult.

If you have any questions/concerns or want to know more about the SOS Program, you can contact one of our school counselors, **Jana Summers at 812-6318 or Jeremy Patton at 812-6317**

If you do not want your student to participate in the SOS program, please complete the OPT-OUT Slip and return it to the school counselor by April 1, 2022. The class will be taught on April 6, 2022 . If we do not hear from you, we will assume your student has permission to participate in the SOS Program.

Sincerely,

APS Counseling Dept.



Chaparral Middle School

SOS PROGRAM OPT-OUT SLIP

I, _____, **DO NOT** give permission for _____
Name of Parent or Guardian *Students Name*

To participate in the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program that will take place **Chaparral Middle School on April 6, 2022**. I understand by signing OPT-OUT request, my student will not receive the information about depression and suicide prevention that will be presented. If they do not receive this information at the school, it is the hope of the Administration and Staff at **Chaparral Middle School** you will find an alternative way for your student to get this important information.

X _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date of Signature

***** To make sure we receive the SOS Program OPT-OUT Slip from you, please bring it or send it with your student to the Counselor's Office *****