



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Domestic Dependent Elementary & Secondary Schools
Puerto Rico District (DoD DDESS-PR)
Antilles High School
1062 Victory Road
Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico 00934
Tel. 787-707-2301/2302 Fax 787-707-2017

MEMORANDUM TO PARENTS OF AHS STUDENTS

RE: Suicide Prevention Campaign at AHS 2009-10

DATE: 17 September 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The teen years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions-difficult for teens, their parents and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil, however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age, and the past decade has seen teen suicide rates double.

To proactively address this issue, Antilles High School (AHS) is offering depression screening and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs Suicide Prevention Program. This program has been used by thousands of schools over the past nine years. It has proven successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention selected by SAMSHA for its national Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. In a randomized control study, the SOS program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness, and help them assess whether or not they may have symptoms consistent with depression.
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression.
- To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend.
- To impress upon teens that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns.

AHS needs the permission slips so we can proceed to do the survey. This survey will produce a profile with a school profile of students at risk so we can work on a systematic prevention program.

Cooperation from Parents is a critical element for this program to succeed, and we count on your involvement and cooperation. We want the best for our students. Mental health is a must for academic success and productive life.

The depression screening tool that we are using concerns thoughts and feelings which parents may be unaware their child is having. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression, but does give an indication of whether a young person should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional. We are enclosing a Parent Version of the same depression screening form and ask that you take a moment to fill it out. We include the questionnaire to make you aware of

the types of questions that your child will be answering and to help you assess your teen's risk for depression. If you are concerned, we encourage you to speak with your son/daughter and follow up with a mental health professional for a complete evaluation.

Please sign the enclosed permission slip allowing your child to take a written screening test for depression and participate in SOS: Signs of Suicide intervention training in school, and return this form to Mrs. Zaida Cacho, Guidance Counselor at AHS.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program or the enclosed screening form please do not hesitate to contact me at (787) 707-2145 or 707-2301/2302.

Sincerely,

David R. Sanabria
Vice-Principal
Antilles High School

cc: Mrs. Z. Cacho, Guidance Counselor
Mr. F. F. Trinidad, Principal

Enclosure