



Douglas Middle School

21 Davis Street, Douglas, MA 01516 (508) 476-3332
Robert E. O'Brien, Principal

FAX (508) 476-1604 www.douglasps.net
Jaclyn Sullivan, Interim Dean of Students

January 8, 2024

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

The school staff at Douglas Middle School are working to teach our eighth grade students about mental health and how to seek help if they are worried about themselves or a friend. We are using a program called SOS "Signs of Suicide." The program teaches students about this difficult topic and encourages them to seek help.

SOS has been used by thousands of schools for over 20 years. Studies have shown that it effectively teaches students about depression and suicide while reducing the number of students' self-reported suicide attempts.

Through the program, students learn:

- That depression is treatable, so they are encouraged to seek help
- How to identify depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- To ACT (Acknowledge, Care and Tell a trusted adult) if concerned about themselves or a friend
- Who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

During mid/late January 2024, students will watch age-appropriate video clips and participate in a guided discussion about depression, suicide, and what to do if they are concerned about a friend. Following the video, students will complete a brief depression screening tool. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression but does indicate whether a young person should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional.

At the end of class, students will complete an exit slip which asks whether they would like to talk to an adult about any concerns. School staff will conduct brief meetings with any student asking to talk.

We encourage you to visit www.sosignsofsuicide.org/parent for information on warning signs for youth suicide, useful resources, and some of the key messages students will learn.

Attached to this letter are some additional useful resources, including:

- An infographic for you to reinforce the ACT message at home
- An informational sheet with national resources
- A list of local resources
- Fact sheets on depression and suicide from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

If you do **NOT** wish for your child to participate in the S.O.S. prevention program, please complete the attached slip below and return it to one of the secretaries in the main office at Douglas Middle School or inform me via email **by January 16, 2024**. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 508-476-3332, ext. 2263, or Kayla Avedian, Douglas Middle School Adjustment Counselor, at ext. 2265.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hurley, M.Ed., CAGS
School Psychologist, Douglas Middle & High Schools
jhurley@douglasps.net

I, _____ **do not give permission** for _____
(name of parent/guardian) (name of student)
to participate in the S.O.S. prevention program taking place at Douglas Middle School.

(parent/guardian signature)

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