



November 15, 2011

Dear San Francisco Unified School District High School Students, Parents and Staff:

I am writing to share information and resources to help support the youth in our community. It is with great sadness that I share the news that within the past several weeks there have been two confirmed suicides by San Francisco high school students. Though only one student attended an SFUSD school, both of these untimely deaths have affected our community as a whole.

Our District staff and community organization partners are providing support to the students and teachers most closely affected by this recent loss by assisting them with their immediate reactions of sadness, confusion, grief, and anger. Ongoing resources are available at the school through the Wellness Program. We also continue to address the issue of teen suicide in all of our high schools.

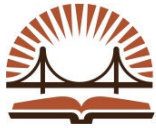
If you have questions or concerns about your child or a friend, please feel free to contact a school counselor, or the Wellness Program at your child's school. In addition, the San Francisco Suicide Prevention website: [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org), provides important information you may find helpful. I have attached to this letter some suggestions taken from their website along with other resources for youth and adults.

In San Francisco we are so fortunate to have teachers, administrators, counselors, and nurses who are committed to keeping our students safe. Unfortunately, our recent loss reminds us that we need to do more. We want to make sure the youth of San Francisco have the tools they need to handle difficult times and know where they can turn for support.

Thank you for taking the time to get to know how you can help.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Carlos A. Garcia



## **Facts and Resources to Help Prevent Suicide**

*The following information comes from San Francisco Suicide Prevention's website, [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org). This website contains helpful and specific information for students, parents and teachers under the Prevention Strategies section.\**

### **How to Help Yourself**

- Don't isolate yourself. Sometimes when we feel down, we crawl into a hole. It is better to reach out, and be with other people when you feel down.
- Talk with someone close to you or speak to an adult you trust. Sometimes an outside person can see a way through a situation that that you cannot. Sometimes depression can be like a wall that you cannot see over or around and you need someone to take you by the hand to help you get around it.
- Talk with a professional, such as a counselor, therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist, or find support through a professionally led group.
- Express yourself through community organizations, physical exercise, art, acting, writing, music, sports, hobbies etc. Just like talking, these are ways people often manage negative feelings.
- Get sleep, eat right and take care of yourself. Sometimes when we are stressed out our sleep suffers, we eat bad foods, or we abuse substances. When you feel down, taking care of your body is especially important.
- If you are feeling down or even suicidal, call San Francisco Suicide Prevention's Crisis Line at 415/781-0500. You can call 24 hours a day.

### **How to Help a Child/Friend**

- Look and listen. If you notice someone close to you saying things or acting in ways that cause you to worry, have the courage to reach out. Directly ask if they are feeling depressed or even thinking of suicide. Let them know that you won't freak out or judge what they have to say.
- Social media is a popular way in which people – especially young people – communicate today. Look at their Facebook pages, Twitter messages and other social media. Today, people often broadcast their pain to the world in this way.

- Don't promise to keep secrets. If someone close to you is talking about suicide, you need to get help, and fast. The best approach is to tell them that the two of you are in this together, and actually go with them to get help. You can even call the SF Suicide Prevention crisis line together.
- If your friend is in serious trouble, and refuses to get help, go to get help yourself. Suicide is serious, don't keep this a secret. If they are in danger, call 911.
- If you want to talk about a friend or loved one in trouble, call San Francisco Suicide Prevention at 415/781-0500. They'll help you figure out what to do.

### **How to Find Places that Help**

#### **SAN FRANCISCO SUICIDE PREVENTION CRISIS LINE - 415/781-0500 (24 hours) or TTY for the Deaf 415/227-0245, [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org)**

24-hour crisis line. Call if you feel depressed, stressed or if you're facing a problem. Or call if you need advice on how to help a friend or loved one who might be depressed or suicidal. You can also contact San Francisco Suicide Prevention on the internet. Just go to [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org) for information, to send an email, or live chat services. [www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org)

#### **SAN FRANCISCO COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CRISIS – 415/970-3800**

24- hour crisis assessment and phone consultation. For parents, teachers and other adults to report a concern about a young person.

### **Youth Serving Organizations that Help**

#### **YOUTHLINE - 888/977-3399, [www.youthlinesf.org](http://www.youthlinesf.org)**

Call 4pm to 10pm to talk to other young people. Information, referrals, job info, places to go and things to do in San Francisco.

#### **SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ YOUTH - 866/488-7386**

Trevor 24-hour suicide prevention and support.

#### **SFUSD SAFE SCHOOLS LINE – 415/241-2141**

A place to leave a recorded message with any student safety concerns. Messages can be anonymous and are checked and responded to by SFUSD's Student Support Services.

*\*Parents and Guardians: the resources above may be helpful to you as well as your child. Remember, if you have further questions or concerns about your child, you can also contact the SFUSD Wellness Program or school counselor at your child's school for resources or support.*