

PETAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.petalschools.com

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and Federal Programs

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Chief Financial Officer

SPECIAL SERVICES
P. O. Drawer 523
617 South Main Street
Petal, MS 39465
Phone: 601-582-4247
Fax: 601-583-0150



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; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Petal High School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program aims to increase help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend. SOS is listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices and in a randomized control study, the SOS High School Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straight forward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- 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 youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns
- To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it

Beginning September 8th, your child will have the opportunity to participate in a training called Friends for Life during their English class. The training consists of a video and short discussion after which students will have the opportunity to complete a response card indicating whether or not they wish to talk to one of our behavior health counselors about themselves or a friend. Our behavior health counselors will follow-up with the response cards within 24 hours and notify parents of any concerns. We have also placed some resources including a parent newsletter and the video *Training Trusted Adults* on the PHS Website.

If you do NOT wish for your child to participate in the SOS High School Program, please complete the form below and return it to Petal High School to the attention of Stacy Fortenberry or you may email her at stacy.fortenberry@petalschools.com. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

SOS ProgramTeam

I, _____, do NOT wish my child _____
print parent name print student name
to participate in the SOS High School Program at Petal High School.

Parent Signature _____