



# News Release

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## **Depression in youth cause for concern**

*September 4 – 10 is National Suicide Prevention Week*

**OLYMPIA** — A Department of Health survey reveals that almost one third of teen-agers in Washington schools experience signs of depression. Untreated depression is one of the leading causes of youth suicide.

According to data from the 2004 Healthy Youth Survey, about 30 percent of teens in grades 8, 10 and 12 felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that it stopped them from doing some usual activities. This closely mirrors results in 2002 where the same survey showed roughly 28 percent of youth in those grades answered the same way.

This is cause for concern for the agency's Youth Suicide Prevention Program – it indicates possible symptoms of untreated depression – one of the leading causes for youth suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers 15-19 in Washington. In 2003 the state suicide rate for this age group was 9.6 per 100,000.

Suicide Prevention Week is September 4–10. Activities are planned around the state to help raise awareness of this issue.

However, Washington's youth suicide prevention strategies are at work throughout the year. The Youth Suicide Prevention Program reaches young people, school personnel, parents, community members and a whole host of Washington residents to help educate about the warning signs for suicide, including depression. Once recognized, adults can take active steps to care for suicidal youth and refer them for help.

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“We have found that prevention works – adults equipped to recognize the warning signs and take action steps are better prepared to intervene with youth who are depressed and suicidal,” said Sue Eastgard, Youth Suicide Prevention Program executive director. “We encourage communities and schools to address this issue; knowing about suicide and its warning signs can save a life.”

The most common signs are:

- Talk of suicide.
- A strong wish to die.
- Signs of serious depression.
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use.
- Grief resulting from a recent suicide attempt by a friend or family member.

If someone you know is considering suicide, there are things you can do. Let them know you care and ask them directly about their thoughts of suicide. Get help by calling 1-800-273-TALK or contacting a counselor, church pastor or health care practitioner.

Two schools will be honored this month for the exceptional suicide prevention campaigns they conducted last school year. Issaquah High School and M.E.A.D. Alternative High School (Spokane) will receive the Trevor R. Simpson Award –in honor of a teenager who committed suicide and whose parents advocated for suicide prevention programming across the state.

The [Youth Suicide Prevention Program Web site](http://www.yspp.org/) (<http://www.yspp.org/>) has more information, which is also available by calling 206-297-5922.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a healthy dose of information.