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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Illinois Pediatricians Recognize Pediatric Suicide

September is National Suicide Prevention Month and ICAAP's Suicide Prevention Ambassadors, Nabil Abou Baker, MD, FAAP of University of Chicago and Nicole Anania, DO, FAAP of Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago are calling on Illinoisians to recognize suicide among children and youth and sharing how everyone can help prevent suicide.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is the second leading cause of death for children older than 9 years of age. Suicide rates are increasing, especially among children aged 10 to 14 years old. Illinois pediatricians want to work with communities to decrease pediatric suicide, with the hopes that rates will one day be zero.

Dr. Anania urges parents to, "Please speak with your child's pediatrician if you are concerned about your child and ask them about what you can do to act quickly should concern arise. Your child's doctor wants to help you in raising a healthy and happy child." Dr. Baker message this month is, "Everyone can help prevent suicide. Knowing the warning signs can save your child's or another child's life." Here are the warning signs:

- A child is talking about killing oneself, feeling hopeless, feeling like a burden, or having no reason to live.
- They are having mood changes such as depression, anxiety and agitation.
- Their behavior is changing, such as increased substance use, withdrawing from activities, isolating from family and friends, sleeping too much or not enough, giving away prized possessions, or is irritable.

There are things we can all do to prevent suicide. If you are worried here are some actions you can take:

1. Ask if someone is suicidal. Say, "Are you thinking about suicide?"
2. Realize that children can face suicide risks you haven't considered.
3. Do not dismiss what you're seeing as "childhood or teenage drama". Take your concern or the child's behavior seriously.
4. Respond with empathy and understanding.
5. Remove or secure guns you have at home. Do the same with other deadly tools and substances.
6. Get professional help right away. Don't wait.
7. Help children stay connected to family, friends or their community.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988, text TALK to 741741 or chat on 988lifeline.org.

- September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day
- September 10th – 16th is National Suicide Prevention Week

The Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) is an organization of approximately 2,000 pediatricians in Illinois. Primary activities include advocacy on behalf of children, families, and health professionals in Illinois. In collaboration with fellow state organizations and agencies ICAAP works to improve the health and well-being of children.

