



NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE  
PREVENTION OF YOUTH SUICIDE

**No child lost to suicide** Dear Colleague:

Suicide claims the lives of over 4000 people age 15-24 every year, and is now the **second leading cause of death for our youth**.

The National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide (NCPYS), a program of the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), is working to change how schools and communities address the issue of suicide among young people, by **inviting youth to take the lead**. We recognize the need for student involvement and ideas in shaping the campaign against suicide. By engaging young adults and providing the facts, the NCPYS seeks not only to help those most at risk, but also to equip school communities with the skills they need to recognize warning signs, help friends in need, and know where to go for help.

In their publication "Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools," the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration **affirms the need for schools to offer a comprehensive suicide prevention program** to include parents, teachers, students, and administrators. The full document is available for free download at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov), and a few excerpts are enclosed for your consideration.

We would like to invite your school to participate in the U OK? Friends Ask! Suicide Prevention Program. Through partnership, we can ensure that your school is better equipped to stop this preventable tragedy. This program provides the knowledge and resources to strengthen and unite your school community. The U OK? Program allows you to become a part of the solution.

Chances are you know someone who has felt suicidal, made a suicide attempt, or died by suicide. If you know how hard it is to lose a friend, if you want a say in serving your community, or if you feel the need to make a difference, get involved in the campaign against youth suicide. Be among the first communities of youth to use your voice to speak out.

Please note that the U OK? Suicide program is proprietary property of the National Center for the Prevention of Suicide. While the information in the enclosed material is publically available, our ability to provide the expertise and tools to advance local efforts, in combination with myths, facts, warning signs, and strategies is what makes our program unique and effective. U OK? provides schools with critical tools to engage administrators, parents, and students about suicide prevention and goes beyond simply offering facts about youth suicide. Local facilitators will learn not only how to engage these audiences but how to do it effectively, so that the message of suicide prevention can be truly heard. While the NCPYS does not charge an administrative fee for schools to run the program, we do expect each participating school to hold a fundraising activity (that we help support through resources and return a portion of proceeds back to the school), with no minimum expectation, which enables us to continue offering the program without a specified fee schedule. The NCPYS offers two off-the-shelf fundraising options for t-shirt sales and wristbands. See enclosures for details.

The enclosed material will provide you with basic information about the U OK? Program. It can be customized to fit the needs of your students and your school. Please review it and contact me with any questions. We can save lives, one school at a time. Won't you please join us?

Best,

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*Peers engaging peers to prevent suicide.*

## THE FACTS

According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death among high school aged youth in the United States. Recent school-based surveys of thousands of youth nationwide indicate that 28.5% felt sad or hopeless for at least two weeks in a row. Another 15.8% seriously considered suicide, 12.8% made a plan for suicide, and 7.8% made a suicide attempt. In all cases, these were endorsed more highly in girls. Despite these startling findings, there are many things we can do to help.

## A SOLUTION

U OK? is a fundraising and awareness model for youth across the country to raise awareness about and help prevent teen suicide. U OK?, a program of the National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide (NCPYS), raises awareness of the problem of teen suicide, mobilizes high school students to become part of the solution and raises money for these activities. U OK? relies on high school students to design and implement their own fundraising and awareness campaigns which include an educational component provided by the NCPYS.

Students are often the first to know that a friend is thinking about suicide. The U OK? program aims to educate participants on what to look for, how to help, and what resources are available to them. The training includes a discussion of warning signs, risk factors, myths, and do's/don'ts. Emphasis will be placed on empowering the students to share and apply what they learn with the goal of reducing the incidence of suicidal behavior while increasing help-seeking behavior among themselves and their peers.

**Suicide is the second leading cause of death among high school aged youth in the U.S.**

# U OK? Friends Ask!

## Peers engaging peers to prevent suicide



### What is U OK?

U OK? is a school or community-based youth suicide prevention and awareness program that harnesses the passion and ability of young leaders to educate their peers on what to look for and how to help. U OK? is offered through the National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide, a program of the American Association of Suicidology. AAS is one of the nation's oldest suicide prevention organizations.

### Why U OK?

Because we know having connections saves lives and friends are often the first to know when a friend is at risk. Asking "U OK?" is the first step in preventing suicidal behaviors.

### What Does U OK? Offer?

U OK? is made up of five components:

1. **Planning & Preparation:** During the planning stage, a staff member from the NCPYS meets with the youth organizers and supervising adult from the host to discuss the process, timelines, goals, etc for their event. U OK? can be customized to meet each host's needs and audience.
2. **Training:** The host group receives training to include an overview on youth suicide, warning signs, how to help, and available resources.
3. **Fundraising:** The host group holds a fundraiser to help support suicide prevention and awareness programs at the national and local levels. A portion of funds raised remain at the host to support future events, with the remaining funds going to the NCPYS to allow for further development of the U OK? program in other regions. Fundraising also serves to promote the larger event where information is distributed to a larger audience as defined by the host.
4. **Awareness Event:** With guidance from the NCPYS, the host plans and holds a suicide prevention and awareness event to engage their community at-large (peers, faculty, parents, etc). This event can be held in conjunction with the fundraiser or separately, and can be customized to meet the specific needs of the host.
5. **After the Event:** The host committee and an NCPYS staff will meet after the event to discuss what went well, what did not, and follow-up plans if needed. It is hoped the host will provide the NCPYS with photos, quotes, etc to upload to the Center's website to highlight their program and encourage other youth to host their own event.

### Are Collateral Materials Available?

Given ample notice, wristbands, t-shirts, and other collateral items may be ordered to help raise funds and/or promote the U OK? event.

### What Does it Take to Offer U OK?

The U OK? program will be more successful if you have the approval and support of the administrator/director for your school or community group, an identified adult who will provide guidance, and a committee made up of passionate and creative youth who want to make a difference in the lives of their peers.

### How Do I Get Started?

The first step is to engage the support of an adult leader in your school or community and recruit other youth to serve on the committee. Next, contact Amy Kulp, NCPYS Director, for additional information and packet of materials. Amy can be reached at [ajkulp@suicidology.org](mailto:ajkulp@suicidology.org) or 202-237-2280.



## **U OK? Program Requirements**

While each U OK? Program will be uniquely designed by youth to meet the needs and concerns of their community or school, in order to adhere to best practices in suicide prevention, we require the following five components to be included in every U OK? Program.

### **WARNING SIGNS & RISK FACTORS**

Educating peers about the warning signs and risk factors for suicide is the cornerstone of the U OK? Program. Resources are available on our website at [www.youthsuicideprevention.org](http://www.youthsuicideprevention.org) that can be printed and distributed as is, or used to create handouts unique for your group.

### **HOW TO HELP**

Talking about suicide prevention sends the message to your participants that your community cares about them and that it is okay to talk about suicide and get help. It is very important to teach youth how to ask "U OK?" and what to do if a peer needs help.

### **LOCAL RESOURCES**

An important and necessary component of any suicide awareness event is to engage and involve local mental health resources, and to make those resources available during your event. Potential resources include: a school counselor, nurse, and/or psychologist; local crisis and/or mental health centers; and local psychiatric clinics or hospitals. At a minimum, the number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK should be posted and distributed to all participants. Ideally, mental health providers are available onsite at your event to help any youth needing assistance.

### **SAFE MESSAGING & MESSAGES OF HOPE**

It is vital that all persons working on the U OK? Program in your school or community be educated about safe messaging. Safe messaging ensures that the information you provide, as well as what you do and say, will have maximum benefit and reduce risk for your audience. A helpful document about safe messaging is enclosed, and is also available online for your consideration.

A common theme in the U OK? Program is one of hope, and that there is help for suicidal youth. While the topic of youth suicide is a serious one, your message needs to be one of encouragement, empowerment and strength.

### **FUNDRAISING**

There is no charge for hosting a U OK? Program. However, we do require each event to include some kind of fundraising component to provide ongoing support for the NCPYS. Planning members can design their own fundraiser or elect to sell wristbands or shirts through an arrangement with the NCPYS. See enclosed materials for additional information and a sample wristband.





## Step-by-step guide to your fundraising event

### PLANNING YOUR EVENT

**Form your planning committee.** Talk up your fundraising ideas with friends and ask them to join you in meaningful, rewarding, and fun work. Make new friends: recruit others you don't know as well, but who are reliable and interested in your project. Keep the committee small: you don't need more than five people.

**Get initial approval.** If your fundraising project is part of a community service club or senior project, talk to your faculty advisor. For fraternities and sororities, talk to your philanthropy chair. For tips on talking to school administrators and personnel, go to [INSERT URL](#).

**Let us know** if you have questions about or are planning on running an event; email [ajkulp@suicidology.org](mailto:ajkulp@suicidology.org)

**Brainstorm ideas with your fundraising committee.** These lists of ideas for fundraising events include everything from bake sales for dogs to celebrity auctions. You might not want to consider all of them, but the list will certainly get you brainstorming!

<http://www.fundraiserinsight.org/ideas/>

<http://www.fundraiserhelp.com/school-fundraisers.htm>

<http://www.fundraisingip.com/fundraising/college-fundraising/>

**Set a goal.** Find out what events raised money in the past by talking to other students and adults in your community or at your school. You don't have to do the same event, but the information can help guide your decisions. Based on what you learn by talking to people, set a fundraising goal. You can make it a stretch, but make it realistic.

**Get competitive.** If you can build a competitive aspect into your fundraising, you'll raise more money. Get someone to donate a prize for your top fundraiser — it doesn't have to be big, but make the award a big deal.

**Plan multiple moneymaking strategies.** If you can include an auction or raffle, they can raise a lot and let non-attendees help your cause. If you have a team event, in addition to the entry fee, sell votes so people can support their teams.

**Don't forget to raise money.** For your fundraising event, avoid buying material and renting equipment. Find sponsors, such as local businesses, who will donate material or subsidize your costs. You will make more profit if you keep your costs low.

**Keep it short and sweet.** Simplicity is key. Planning events means keeping track of lots of details, and its running smoothly will contribute to your success. Also, people's interest may lessen if the event goes on too long.

**Don't do it all yourself.** Having more volunteers means more people contributing time, talent, and treasure. Everyone on the planning committee can invite people to help.

**Consider your location and time of year.** For example, if it's spring, consider a daffodil sale. Plan for an alternate location if the event is outdoors and you can't count on good weather.

**Set the date,** but first check a few calendars to avoid conflicts with other events and holidays. To set the location, talk to several people. Consider the weather, traffic, and potential conflicts such as construction. Talk to school or campus administrators both to get permission and to find more avenues to promote the event. Talk to campus security or local law enforcement. Be sure that the date is far enough in the future so that there is enough time to plan the event. If the event has to be outdoors, set an alternate date just in case the weather is not ideal.

### ONCE THE YOU'VE GOT YOUR PLAN

**Let NCPYS Know About it.** Complete and submit the Fundraising Agreement and Contact Sheet posted at [INSERT URL](#).

**Promote the event.** Test your who-what-where-when-how messages on a couple of people before you release them to the public. Consider using email, text messages, Facebook, and Twitter as well as fliers, your school newspaper, and bulletin boards. Be sure to say a "Youth Suicide Prevention Fundraising Event" or something like that: don't forget the word "prevention". Google "press release" for the form to use with media or follow the advice from fundraisingIP.com at <http://>

[www.fundraisingip.com/fundraising/the-power-of-a-press-release/](http://www.fundraisingip.com/fundraising/the-power-of-a-press-release/)

**Let people know other ways to donate.** If someone has to miss your event, make sure your promotion includes the alternative of donating for the National Center online at <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/donate> or buying raffle tickets.

**Plan to raise awareness about suicide prevention while you raise money.** How you talk about suicide is important, and we can help you with that. You can say that suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for youth, or the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for college students BUT you also want to emphasize prevention and provide helping resources.

- Emphasize that suicide is usually related to mental illness — up to 90% of youth and young adults who die by suicide have some form of mental illness or substance abuse — and there are treatments that work.
- Promote the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) 1-800-273-8255 for individuals who are in crisis or need someone to talk with. The NSPL has free promotional material at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Materials/Default.aspx> but be sure to order it ahead of time as it can take up to four weeks to arrive.
- Also promote local mental health, health, and social service agencies. Your campus, school, or community mental health center may already have a list or a service agency may sign on as a cosponsor.
- Although a fair number of young people attempt suicide, do not present attempts as common events. Most youth do not attempt suicide.
- Feel free to use language or resource sheets from our web pages at <http://www.suicidology.org/ncpys>

**A special word about memorial events.** If your event follows the suicide of a young person, there are some guidelines to help prevent other young people from considering suicide:

- Don't romanticize or glorify his or her death, or hold him or her up as a role model.
- Don't say that the individual's suicide was an inexplicable happening, or the result of stress or a single cause such as bullying. Oversimplifying the death can make it seem like an acceptable response.
- Don't go into details about how the person died by suicide: this can lead to imitation.

## **RUNNING THE EVENT ON THE DAY**

**Taking care of set-up and clean-up.** Be sure to have a detailed schedule of when tasks need to be done to ensure that everything is set up in time for the event. Allow more time than you need and assign a couple of runners who can take care of problems that may come up. Make a list of volunteers and who is doing what. To keep everything running smoothly, make sure people know who to talk to if they have any questions. For example, volunteers can wear hats or t-shirts, and the event coordinators can wear a different color.

**Coordinators need to be accessible.** Before the event you can give out cell phone numbers and be on call.

**Enjoy event day!** Don't put too much responsibility on one person. Be sure to delegate jobs throughout the day. Be flexible, and don't stress if everything doesn't go exactly as planned.

## **AFTER THE EVENT**

**Thank all the volunteers and donors;** emphasize how their help or funds helped support the NCPYS and youth suicide prevention.

**Congratulate yourself** and take a break.

**Debrief — process your experience and results.** Make some notes about what worked and what didn't. Even if you don't plan on another event, newcomer fundraisers and others will likely ask you for information.

**Send your proceeds** in a single check made payable to the NCPYS/AAS to the following address: Amy Kulp, Director, NCPYS, 5221 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20015. Please include names and addresses of any donors who wish to receive a letter for tax purposes.

**Share** photos, videos, and highlights of your event with others by emailing the NCPYS webmaster at [webmaster@suicidology.org](mailto:webmaster@suicidology.org).

## NCPYS FUNDRAISING OPTIONS

### WRISTBANDS

Looking for an easy, low-cost and high-volume way to raise funds for your event? the NCPYS has U OK? Wristbands ready to ship to your committee! Here's how it works:

1. Estimate the number of wristbands you can sell before and during your U OK? Event.
  2. Place an order with the NCPYS by filling out the form.
  3. Sell, sell, sell! We recommend charging \$2 per bracelet.
  4. At the end of your event, return all funds and unsold wristbands to the NCPYS.
  5. We will cut you a check for your share of the revenue.
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### U OK? T-SHIRTS

Want to keep your message out there long after your event? Consider selling U OK? shirts as a way to create buzz about youth suicide, wear them at your event, and get out the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number! Sell a shirt and save a life!

All sales are online and there is no risk to your school. Shirts can be customized to include your school or group name and logo. Advanced notice and a minimum of 50 shirts is required.

#### Here's how it works:

1. Fill out and return the form to the NCPYS.
2. We will work with you to create your online campaign.
3. Customers can pay their own shipping charges or elect to pick up their order at your school or club.
4. Spread the word about the shirt sales and your event
5. Shirts will only print if the minimum number is sold. There is NO RISK or up front costs to you!
6. Funds are sent directly from the online vendor to the NCPYS.
7. We will cut you a check for your share of the revenue.





