



MINOOKA COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT # 111

Mission: To inspire and motivate our students with an educational experience that leads to achievement and success.

Joseph V. Pacetti
Director of Student Services

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years for children are commonly marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions and are often difficult for students, their parents, and even educators. Unfortunately, it is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (one of the most common mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. It is also important to note that depression, which is treatable, is also a leading risk factor for suicide.

In an effort to proactively address these issues, Minooka Community High School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. Listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, the SOS Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64% in randomized control studies (Aseltine et al., 2007 & Schilling et al., 2016) and ultimately aims to increase help seeking by students concerned about himself, herself, or a friend.

Minooka Community High School's goals in participating in this program are:

- 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, and;
- To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it.

This program is brought to us by Elyssa's Mission, a nonprofit organization dedicated to suicide prevention, and will be presented to all 9th graders on November 27th, November 29th, December 4th, and December 8th. Elyssa's Mission is the only organization in the state of Illinois to fund, distribute and implement SOS. As part of the program, facilitators will show the SOS video and subsequently lead students in discussion. Students will then complete a brief depression screener as well as fill out a Response Card indicating whether or not they would like to speak to an adult about themselves or a friend. The depression screening tool addresses thoughts and feelings of which a parent may be unaware their child is having. This tool does not provide a diagnosis of depression, but rather alerts school staff to those students requiring further investigation.

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School mental health staff will be available to meet with designated students, and school staff will subsequently notify parents/guardians regarding any needed next steps.

To get more information on suicide prevention, visit the Elyssa's Mission website at www.elyssasmission.org. I also invite you to view their online Parent Presentation at <http://elyssasmission.org/parent-suicide-prevention-training/> for specific information on warning signs and how to keep your child safe.

If you have any questions and/or do NOT want your child to participate in the SOS Program, please contact me at 815-467-2140, ext. 5035 prior to the program date. If I do not hear from you, MCHS will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

Joseph V. Pacetti
Director of Student Services
Minooka Community High School District 111