



# DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

*"FILLING LIVES WITH HOPE"*

May 22, 2018

## **Dear Parents/Grandparents/Guardians of Pre-Teens and Teenagers:**

The Diocese of San Bernardino wants to support and encourage you to engage in a conversation with your pre-teen and teenage children about suicide prevention, mental health and ways to get help. As Catholics we believe we are made in the likeness and image of God and that all life is sacred. (Catechism of Catholic Church, #2280-2283) We will be continuing this conversation in our Catechetical and Confirmation classes and Youth Ministry programs in the Fall. Here are some resources that will help with your conversation.

### **GUIDANCE FOR FAMILIES from National Association of School Psychologists (NASP):**

1. If they exhibit any of the warning signs below, don't be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide or if someone is hurting them. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
2. Ask your child if they think any of their friends or classmates exhibit warning signs. Talk with them about how to seek help for their friend or classmate.
3. Listen to your children's comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what is being said. Put your own agenda aside.
4. Get help from a school-employed or community-based mental health professional if you are concerned for your child's safety or the safety of one of their peers.

### **What Parents Should Look For In Pre-Teen/Teenagers Behavior:**

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks.
- Seriously trying to harm oneself or someone else, or making plans to do so.
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing.
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make oneself lose weight.
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Drastic changes in the student's behavior or personality

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and the California Catholic Bishops released a pastoral letter on mental health at [cacatholic.org/hope](http://cacatholic.org/hope) and healing. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. Local resources can be found at [connectriverside.org/helpline](http://connectriverside.org/helpline) for the County of Riverside and [namisb.org](http://namisb.org) for the County of San Bernardino. Thank you for your attention to this very important issue. In Christ,

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