



What is the SOS Signs of Suicide® High School program?

The SOS Signs of Suicide® High School Program is a nationally recognized, easily implemented, cost-effective program of suicide prevention for secondary school students. It is the only school-based program to:

- ❖ Show a **reduction in suicide attempts** (by 40%) in a randomized controlled study (American Journal of Public Health, March, 2004).
- ❖ Be selected by [SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices \(NREPP\)](#).
- ❖ The SOS Program has also documented a dramatic **increase in help-seeking behavior** by others (Adolescent and Family Health, 2003).

SOS Signs of Suicide® programs are depression awareness and suicide prevention programs that can be implemented in one or more classroom periods by existing school staff. The SOS programs can also be used in alternative settings serving youth such as: social clubs, after school programs, and juvenile justice systems.

The main teaching tool of the SOS programs is a video that teaches youth how to identify symptoms of depression and suicidality in themselves or their friends, and to respond effectively by seeking help from a trusted adult. A Discussion Guide accompanies each video and includes topics for classroom discussion. The program also includes an optional brief screening tool (only 7 questions) that can be used to identify high risk students.

The programs' primary objectives are to educate youth that depression is a treatable illness and to equip them to respond to a potential suicide in a friend or family member using the SOS technique. SOS is an action-oriented approach instructing students how to ACT (Acknowledge, Care and Tell) in the face of a mental health emergency. The SOS programs also provide education materials for youth, parents, and school staff, including post-vention guidelines.

There is also a middle school program for grades 6th through 8th.

What makes SOS a good fit for Montana schools?

- ❖ It can be easily implemented into a variety of classes (Health, English, Social Studies, Communication Arts, P.E., etc).
- ❖ Uses existing school resources and only needs one or two people to coordinate the program.
- ❖ It can be implemented in as little as one classroom period (or up to three)
- ❖ The program is very flexible. Schools can use the parts of the program that fit their needs.
- ❖ It has research showing that it is safe, effective, and not a burden to school support staff.
- ❖ It promotes collaboration between schools and parents as well as community mental health providers.
- ❖ Serves as a risk management tool for schools.
- ❖ Has been shown to be an effective prevention program for a wide variety of demographics, in both rural and urban settings.

What is the cost of the program?

- ❖ **NOTHING!** The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services is willing to purchase the SOS Program for all Montana secondary schools willing to implement the program (the regular cost is \$300 per kit).

For additional information about the SOS program, please contact:

Karl Rosston, LCSW
Suicide Prevention Coordinator
Montana DPHHS
(406) 444-3349
krosston@mt.gov