

Who Should We Ask?

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I am writing this proposal to ask you to make representation to the US Government Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in relation to improving support and guidance to young teenagers who are prone to depression and feelings of suicide by introducing new class room activities.

A survey by Youth Risk Behaviour (YRBS) in 2013 has published information relating to trends in prevalence of suicidal related behaviour in 9th through to 12th Grade students in public and private schools throughout the United States.

The (YRBS) survey is conducted by the Centres for Disease Control & Prevention that includes national, state, and local school based representative samples, the purpose of which, is to monitor priority risk health behaviours that contribute to leading causes of death, disability and social problems among youth in the USA.

The results published contained information from 1991-2013 and covered questions around seriously considering attempting suicide, making a plan about how they would attempt suicide and actual suicide attempts.

Although the rates of seriously considering attempting suicide have fallen from 29% in 1991 to 17% in 2013 the trend across all areas considered is on the rise and specifically since 2009. (up from 13.8% in 2009 to 17% in 2013)

I feel this is a real worrying statistic and these added to the fact that suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for aged 10-24 (2010 CDC WISQARS) and is the 3rd leading cause of death for

1 college age youths aged 12-18 (2010 CDC WISQARS) gives me great cause for concern.

2 More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS,
3 strokes and chronic lung disease COMBINED.

4 I feel the recent increased trend of youngsters seriously considering attempting suicide may be
5 in direct relation to the worldwide recession of 2008 that has caused families to struggle
6 financially, with some families being torn apart and teenagers may have had to move home
7 with one parent. They may also then feel the pressure for them to perform better in schooling
8 to ensure a happier home life with the parent.

9 There is also more and more pressure on youngsters to be part of the online social media
10 community which can have some devastating effects if the relationships built up deteriorate
11 and we then see the fallout from bullying and intimidation on line.

12 There is also an issue around the potential for employment when leaving school. The Youth
13 Unemployment Rate in the United States increased to 13.70 percent in September of 2014
14 from 13 percent in August of 2014 and the Youth Unemployment Rate in the United States
15 averaged 12.32 Percent from 1955 until 2014, reaching an all-time high of 19.60 Percent in April
16 of 2010.

17 If we take into consideration the high figures this has occurred in the middle of the largest
18 financial crisis and adds more weight to the pressures on the shoulders of youngsters as they
19 may also feel that there are no opportunities in the labour market when they leave schooling.

20 In terms of teaching I feel this should be introduced as part of the general curriculum. We

1 teach children how to add up and read poetry but we fail to teach the basics of life such as how
2 to handle money and to deal with how they feel in a much more open way.

3 I would have special visits from people (or former pupils) who have suffered from depression
4 at school age, come in and chat to the pupils about what they went through and why they were
5 feeling this way. An open group much like you see at Alcoholic Anonymous meetings where
6 everything is open and students can talk openly about these feelings.

7 I would also like to suggest that parents come into the school and also take part in these
8 discussions. They can show and tell the class that they have negative feelings and happy times
9 and that being able to balance these is part of your normal day to day existence and everyone
10 has these feelings every day. The pupil is not alone in having these feelings.

11 We deal with a lot of facts in schooling but very little feeling and I feel this needs to change.

12 I feel these initiatives fit in perfectly with your objective of Community Support for Families and
13 Youth. Your NAMI basics package and the NAMI Family to Family initiatives are all very credible
14 and worthwhile but I feel we need to get to the problems at a much earlier age and I feel that
15 bringing your expertise into schools will allow you to continue your good work in this area.

16 Your team can arrange and plan these specific meetings on a weekly basis and raise the
17 awareness of the organisation and the good it does in the community, along with actually
18 making a real difference to individuals that interact in the discussions.

19 I believe NAMI can help in these matters and will outline where I feel you can help make
20 difference in the future mental health welfare of these youngsters.

1 Your website quotes

2 "Suicide is one of the greatest tragedies imaginable for a victim and their loved ones. Each year
3 suicide claims approximately 30,000 lives in America which makes it responsible for slightly
4 more than 1 percent of deaths in the United States. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are a
5 psychiatric emergency requiring immediate intervention to prevent this disastrous event. It is
6 the most common psychiatric emergency with close to 1 million Americans receiving treatment
7 for suicidal thoughts, behaviors or attempts on a yearly basis."

8 My proposal is to make sure we get clear, easy to read literature out into all schools across the
9 United States that outline the basics of depression and how these negative feelings can be
10 managed. I do not feel that society does enough at the school age to teach youngsters about
11 feelings and how they are normal and an everyday part of you being a normal human being. We
12 can all feel fear, rejection, loss and happiness and part of our own mental wellbeing is being
13 able to adjust and cope with these feelings day to day.

14 The literature should include local contact details for professionals in the industry and give the
15 students information around what kind of pastoral care is available within the school to assist
16 them in taking matters forward.

17 Part of an individual's problem stem from the fact that they do not want to talk about their
18 feelings or anxieties to someone they know and it is really important that they are aware that
19 there is a confidential process they can use to help them.

20 I believe suicide is a public health issue and I feel that the Department of Health & Human

1 Services is the office best placed to take these matters forward rather than the Department of
2 Education. Although my proposals revolve around introducing new lessons into the curriculum I
3 feel we need the public health issues to be addressed and highlighted to the Government to
4 make them aware of what needs to be done. We can then put pressure on for these changes to
5 be made

6 Will you put my proposals to the Government and along with your support I feel we can start to
7 make a big difference in helping youngsters cope much better with their negative feelings and
8 therefore reduce the inclination of suicidal thoughts and the terrible tragedies that follow.

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