**Teacher, Parent, and Student Resources**

** Penn Manor School District **

**Fact Sheet: Self-Injurious Behaviors (SIB)**

**What is self-injury?**

* Self-injury, also known as cutting or self-mutilation, occurs when someone intentionally and repeatedly harms herself/himself. The method most frequently used is cutting, but other behaviors include burning, scratching, picking, punching, or drinking something harmful, such as bleach or detergent.

**Who does this?**

* It is estimated that about two million people in the U. S. injure themselves in some way through one of the methods mentioned above. The majority are teenagers or young adults of all races and social status. However, young women surpass the number of young men who chose to self-injure.

**Why do they do this?**

* People have indicated that they hurt themselves to express emotional pain or feelings that they cannot express in words.
* It is a way to have control over your body when a person feels they cannot control anything else in their life. Many people who cut themselves may also have an eating disorder.
* Although they are not attempting suicide, sometimes they cause an injury they are unable to control and die accidentally.

**How can I help a friend who self-injures?**

* Ask your friend about it. If your friend is hurting emotionally, she/he may be relieved to have someone mention it so they can talk about. If a person is not involved in self-injury, they are not going to start because you asked them about it.
* Offer options, but don’t tell them what they should to. If they are harming themselves because they are trying to have control over their life, you will not be able to take control over the situation. Help your friend find ways to get the help they need by talking to a parent, teacher, school counselor or mental health professional. This may be the best thing you can do for her/him.

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* Seek support. While you may feel that you do not have the right to tell anyone else, your friend could be at risk for a serious injury. Encourage your friend to go with you to the school counselor. If they will not go, tell your school counselor or a trusted adult about your friend’s self-injury behavior. They can help you deal with the fear and stress that may occur because you are aware of the self-harm. Besides, they can provide you with information to help you.
* Remember, you are not responsible for ending the self-abuse. Don’t make her/him provide to stop because they may just continue and hide it from you. You can’t make your friend stop hurting themselves or get professional help. The only sure thing you can do is continue being a good friend.

**How can I help myself?**

* Know that there is help available. There are treatments for people who injure themselves. To learn about it, speak with your school counselor or contact your local mental health association. Check out the S.A.F.E. Alternates website.
* Know that you are not alone! Because there are many people who self-injure, there may be people around you who understand and can help.
* Know that you can get better! This may be a difficult time in your life, but there are people around you who care and can help you find see beyond this time.
* Get help right away! The longer you wait, the greater the problem will become and soon everyone will know about it. If you seek help sooner, rather than later, you will be able to live a life with better ways to solve your problems.

**Resources**

S.A.F.E. Alternatives (Self-Abuse Finally Ends)

[www.self-injury.com](http://www.self-injury.com)

Information Line: 1-800-DONT CUT

**References**

S.A.F.E. Alternatives website.

<http://www.selfinury.com>

Adapted from: Mental Health America’s mpower: www.mpoweryouth.org

**Risk Factors**

**Early Identification and Referral**

Early identification of students with one or more suicidal risk factors is vital to a school entity’s suicide prevention efforts. The School District encourages staff members to be aware of the potential risk factors and warning signs for youth suicide, which are outlined below.

**Risk factors** refer to personal or environmental characteristics that may be associated with suicidal behavior including, but not limited to:

1. Behavioral Health Issues/Disorder, specifically but not exclusively:

2. Depression

3. Bipolar disorder or other mood disorder

4. Substance abuse or dependence

5. Depression

6. Previous suicide attempts

7. Self-injury

8. Hopelessness/low self-esteem

9. Loneliness/social alienation/isolation/lack of belonging

10. Poor problem-solving or coping skills

11. Impulsivity/risk-taking/recklessness

12. Adverse/stressful life circumstances

13. Gender identity/sexual orientation

14. Homelessness

15. Interpersonal difficulties or losses

16. Disciplinary or legal problems, including school disciplinary issues

17. Bullying (victim or perpetrator; target, aggressor and/or witness)

18. School or work issues

19. Physical, sexual or psychological abuse

20. Exposure to family or peer suicide

21. Family characteristics - lots of conflict, few activities

22. Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior

23. Family mental health problems, including alcoholism

24. Divorce/death of parent conflict

**Warning Signs**

**Warning signs** are evidence-based indicators that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the future. These signs may mean that a youth is at risk for suicide, particularly for youth who have attempted suicide in the past. Risk is greater if the warning sign is new and/or has increased and if it seems related to an anticipated or actual painful event, loss, or change for the student. Finally, the presence of more than one of the following warning signs may increase a youth’s risk for engaging in suicidal behaviors:

1. Talking about or making plans for suicide;

2. Expressing hopelessness about the future;

3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress;

4. Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of

 the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:

a. Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations;

b. Recent increased agitation or irritability;

c. Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context; and/or

d. Changes in sleep (increased or decreased).

Staff members who observe a student with potential risk factors or warning signs, should report these observations to either the school guidance department, school nurse or Student Assistance team.