Disabilities can increase suicide risk among college students. Students with physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities, like all college students, are at risk for suicide.

Unfortunately, the complexity of understanding the unique needs for college students with disabilities may lead to overlooking risk factors for suicide such as:

- the absence of caretakers while learning to become increasingly self-sufficient,
- the severity and visibility of a disability,
- holding persistent beliefs of achieving full health and/or ability, and
- when the disability is acquired.

Research has shown that the risk for suicide is higher if the disability is less visible.
KNOW THE SUICIDE RISKS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Suicide Risk Increases when students with disabilities experience:
- Prejudice or discrimination
- Problems with developing or maintaining independence
- A recent loss (e.g., death or break-up)

Suicide Risk Increases when the student:
- Is unwilling to seek help because of mental health stigma
- Is in denial of the disability
- Has conflict between their self-concept and their disability
- Stops medication or treatment for their disability

Suicide Risk Increases when there is a:
- Family history of depression and/or suicide
- History of abuse
- Personal history of previous suicide attempts
- Mental health problem that is undiagnosed

Suicide Risk Increases when the student with disabilities has access to:
- Firearms or other lethal methods

KNOW THE SUICIDE RISK WARNING SIGNS

An individual may be suicidal if he or she:
- Reports feeling very depressed
- Experiences anxiety and/or stress
- Has increased conflicts with friends, roommates, peers, faculty
- Talks about wanting to commit suicide
- Is focused on death and dying
- Writes about death and/or suicide
- Starts giving away possessions
- Withdraws from family, friends, and activities once enjoyed
- Says things like, “I don’t deserve to be here,” “I wish I were dead,” “I am going to kill myself,” or “I want to die.”
- Increases their use of alcohol and/or other drugs
- Engages in reckless behaviors
- Secures a firearm or other lethal methods

TAKE SUICIDE RISK SERIOUSLY, CONVEY HOPE

Hopefulness is the best defense against suicide. It is always better to overreact than underreact.
- Stay calm, listen and accept their feelings.
- Try not to judge or argue.
- Don’t act shocked by their plans.
- Be direct. Do not be afraid.
- Be persistent but gentle as you get them to answer your question.

DON’T IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS.

Reach Out: Always Ask.
- Ask them if they are thinking about suicide.
- If you can’t ask, get someone who will ask.

GET HELP, TOGETHER:

Know the resources at OSU and in your community:
- Offer to go with the person for help at:
  OSU CCS (student counseling center): 614-292-5766
  Hospital Emergency Room: 614-293-8333
- Help them call the Suicide Hotline:
  Columbus Area: 1-614-221-5445
  National/Veteran: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Emergency Services: 911

NEVER LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE, IF POSSIBLE.

Find someone else who can help:
- Family or friends
- Religious leader
- The Counseling Center
- Resident Advisors
- Campus Security

Help them find a reason to live one more day.
There is hope.
There is treatment that helps.

KNOWING ABOUT DEPRESSION HELPS

What is Depression?
- It is a medical problem.
- It can affect anyone at any time.
- You don’t “get over it” or “snap out of it”.
- Like any illness, a person with depression needs professional help.
- It can be successfully treated with appropriate treatment.
- Stress, life events or a combination are triggers.

How does Depression feel? People with depression report that they feel:
- Sadness that lasts longer than a few days or weeks.
- Little or no enjoyment in life;
- Tired much of the time;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Worthlessness or guilty;
- Hopelessness and despair.

What does Depression look like? Learn to recognize the signs.
- Depressed mood
- Irritability
- Diminished interest in activities
- Difficult falling asleep or sleeping all the time

Common concerns among Students with Disabilities who experience depression

Understanding what to look for is helpful:
- Academic problems: Missing classes, not completing assignments, inattentiveness, and/or failing exams and courses.
- Relationship problems: Conflicts with roommates, family, friends, and/or partners, feelings of social isolation, feeling misunderstood
- Engaging in risky behaviors: Violence, unprotected sexual practices, alcohol and other drug abuse, and/or driving under the influence.
- Spiritual disconnection: Loss of faith, alienation from religion due to suicidal thoughts.