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October 22, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Recently we lost a member of our school community. Amanda Todd was a Grade 10 student at CABE, and we all grieve her loss. We now know the story of Amanda and her struggles in dealing with bullying. As you can imagine, this is a very difficult time for Amanda's loved ones and for many members of our community. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Amanda's family and those touched by this tragedy.

Suicide is a complex issue that involves many contributing factors. We know that bullying can elevate the risk of suicide in those young people who are already vulnerable. We also know that we're in a critical period when high profile trauma intensifies already existing symptoms. This can contribute to an increase in suicidal thoughts among these vulnerable students.

Awareness and education are key to preventing bullying. As parents, it is important that you watch for changes in your child's behavior and signs of stress. Open dialogue with your child is critical to supporting them. We ask that you talk to them about bullying, appropriate internet use and how they are feeling. If you are concerned about your child's welfare please talk to a school staff member or seek help from other community support services.

I encourage you to review the following resources:

- The www.deal.org, www.bullying.org or www.cyberbullying.ca websites include facts on what bullying is, why people bully and who they target and how parents can deal with their child, whether they are being bullied or are the ones doing the bullying.
- Link to Ministry of Children and Families <http://www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/> (also included as an attachment)
- Link to Ministry of Children and Families page on suicide prevention http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/suicide_prevention/index.htm

As a School District we will continue to follow up on every reported case of bullying and attempt to seek resolutions. We will also continue to use a variety of programming to raise awareness of the issue and the supports available. Staff will be watchful for signs of increased anxiety.

In addition, we are looking at ways to work with the broader community to increase dialogue about a collaborative approach to this serious issue. Let's hope that Amanda's legacy will be that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and that caring people banding together can have a positive impact on their community.

Tom Grant, Superintendent

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

Oct. 12, 2012

Resources for youth with suicidal thoughts

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Children and Family Development would like to remind young people and their families that if they are feeling alone, sad, or having thoughts of suicide, help is available.

Here are a few numbers youth and families can contact themselves or on behalf of someone else to get immediate help:

- 1 800 SUICIDE (1 800 784-2433)
- Youth in BC: 1 866 661-3311 (toll-Free). Youth in BC is an online crisis service, where you can chat 1-on-1 with a trained volunteer 24 hours a day.
- Aboriginal People Crisis Line: 1 800 588-8717
- Native Youth Crisis Hotline: 1 877 209-1266
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: A free 24 hour hotline in Canada or the U.S. 1 800 273-8255
- Kids Help Phone: 1 800 668-6868. The Kids Help Line is a national organization offering bilingual, 24-hour toll-free confidential phone counselling, referral and Internet services for children and youth or their parents in English and French.

Most children and youth having thoughts of suicide show signs of their distress, although some do not. Some of the changes families and others may see in children and youth who may be at risk for suicide include:

- Talking about suicide or a plan for suicide.
- Saying things like, “I’m going to kill myself,” “I wish I were dead,” “I shouldn’t have been born,” “I won’t be a problem for you much longer,” “Nothing matters,” or “It’s no use.”
- Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness.
- Complaining of being a bad person or feeling “rotten inside,” refusing help or feeling beyond help. Not tolerating praise or rewards.
- Giving away favourite possessions or making a will.
- Being preoccupied with death.
- Showing a loss of interest in pleasurable activities or things they once cared about. Always feeling bored.

- Feeling trapped, increasingly anxious, agitated or angry.
- Showing marked personality changes and serious mood changes.
- Withdrawing from friends and family.
- Expressing plans to seek revenge.
- Sleeping all of the time or unable to sleep.
- Having trouble concentrating or difficulties with school work.
- Complaining frequently about physical symptoms often related to emotions, such as stomach aches, headaches or fatigue. Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Showing impulsive behaviours, such as violent actions, rebellious behaviour or running away.
- Increasing or excessive substance use.
- Becoming suddenly cheerful after a period of depression (may mean the youth has already made the decision to escape their problems through suicide).

The ministry has several initiatives around the province that aim to reduce the risk of youth suicide, for example, the [FRIENDS for Life program](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm): http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm
This is a school-based prevention program designed to increase resiliency and reduce anxiety for B.C. students.

The ministry has compiled best practice information for practitioners related to youth suicide prevention, intervention and steps following suicide. This information is posted on the ministry website: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/suicide_prevention/for_professionals.htm

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