



Dedicated to Excellence
Cherry Creek Schools

Dear Cherry Creek Schools Community,

September marks Suicide Prevention month across the world and serves as an opportunity for us to connect with you regarding this important matter. While we use this month to increase knowledge and combat the stigma around suicide, I want to assure you that suicide prevention is a daily activity in our schools.

CCSD has increased our commitment to suicide prevention and mental health support in many ways, including:

- increased mental health staffing to ensure all schools have more staff trained in suicide prevention and intervention strategies;
- a registered nurse in every school;
- developmentally appropriate, evidence-based school programming to create safe school cultures and help students build strong anti-bullying and social-emotional skills;
- two school-based community health centers; and
- for the first time, a universal social-emotional screener will be piloted in multiple schools to ensure early identification and support are offered to students when needed.

Our support for students is evidence-based, driven by an understanding of developmental needs, and centered on doing what is best for every child.

Elementary and Middle School Levels

At the elementary level, we emphasize teaching social-emotional skills, as they are connected to reducing suicide risk. At the middle school level, we introduce *Signs of Suicide*, a program that teaches students how to identify and respond to the signs of suicide and depression in themselves and their classmates. It guides them to get help from a trusted adult at school, at home, or in the community. School staff takes trusted adult training that prepares them to respond in helpful and supportive ways to students in need.

Middle and High School Levels

Middle and high schools expand upon that foundation with *Sources of Strength*, a student-led wellness program designed to build resilience, increase connection, change unhealthy norms around help-seeking, break down codes of secrecy and silence and teach healthy coping strategies. A diverse group of peer leaders works with adult advisors throughout the year in an elective class or after-school group to plan, problem-solve and activate various strategies. These campaigns are designed to spread hope, help, and strength within the school community.

Suicide prevention also occurs through the day-to-day actions of our staff by building trust and relationships, engaging in ongoing equity work and cultural humility, modeling a growth mindset, and reducing stigma by normalizing conversations about mental health.

Getting Involved

Visit the CCSD suicide prevention section of our website to familiarize yourself with protective factors and resources: <https://www.cherrycreekschools.org/Page/4170>

Watch this powerful film developed by CCSD students and staff to empower all of us to do our part in preventing suicide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V8yFsC0BY>

Most importantly, talk to the young people in your life. Let them know that they matter. Let them know they have a network of support, care, and love. Carry the message that while difficult times in life are inevitable, suicide is not. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of every single one of our students.

Sincerely,

Christopher Smith

Superintendent