

# **A Pastoral Care Resource for Adult Leaders Ministering to Youth**



**Crisis Care Intervention with Teens:  
Responses, Referrals, and Resources**

## **Rationale and Usage:**

This resource is a quick reference to help adults ministering with youth

1. recognize warning signs that place youth at risk to harm themselves or others
2. provide a process for making an effective professional referral
3. provide a list of crisis intervention community resources

For additional pastoral care formation in crisis intervention please consult with the Office of Adolescent Catechesis and Evangelization.

## **Table of Contents**

I. Warning Signs of Clinical Depression in Adolescents

II. Suicide Warning Signs in Depressed Teens

III. Making a Referral to a Professional

IV. Community Crisis Care Organizations and Resources

## **I. Warning Signs of Clinical Depression in Adolescents**

**The generic label of “depression”** is sometimes ascribed to the normal, natural ebb and flow of life when human emotion indicates a period of sadness. The sadness is typically related to a sense of loss or inability to cope with certain stressors. It could also be attributed to various kinds of drugs or alcohol abuse. Generally, these feelings or melancholy moods are temporary and will pass within a few days. About 5 percent of children and adolescents in the general population suffer from depression at any given point of time.

**Clinical depression** in children and teens is defined when the feelings of sadness persist for more than two weeks and/or interfere with a child or adolescent’s ability to function.

The following warning signs are to be taken seriously:

**1. Frequent sadness, tearfulness, crying.** Sometimes this is expressed by wearing black clothes, being preoccupied with music that has destructive themes, listening to writing poetry or stories with dark, morbid themes.

**2. Vague and generalized feelings of hopelessness or helplessness.** Teens may feel life is not worth living or that a negative situation will never change. Perhaps they are being bullied or harassed and are intimidated to take no action.

**3. Irritability, anger, or hostility.** Teens are different from adults in that they may tend to exhibit these symptoms rather than overt sadness.

**4. Restlessness and agitation**

**5. Feelings of worthless and guilt.** Blaming oneself for causing or being

responsible for an accident or being the survivor of an accident

**6. Loss of interest in activities which usually give one pleasure**

**7. Fatigue or lack of energy**

**8. Changes in eating and sleeping patterns**

**9. Difficult concentrating**

**10. Thoughts of death or suicide**

**11. Extreme sensitivity to criticism**

**12. Withdrawal from some but not all friends**

**13. Frequent complaints about aches and pains that cannot be diagnosed**

**14. Engagement in violent, high risk, or self-destructive behavior**

**15. Self-medication through substance abuse**

**16. Running away from home**

**17. Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school**

- [Helpguide.org](http://Helpguide.org)
- Pastoral Care Resource Manual (Revised Edition), Center for Ministry Development, 2004
- Human Relations Media, When Someone Dies: Bereavement and Loss, 2003, Teacher's Resource Book, p.23

## II. Suicide Warning Signs in Depressed Teens

1. Talking or joking about committing suicide
2. Saying things like, "I'd be better off dead," or "There's no way out."
3. Speaking positively about death or romanticizing dying ("If I died, I would be at peace")
4. Writing stories and poems about death, dying, or suicide
5. Engaging in reckless behavior or having a lot of accidents resulting in injury
6. Giving away prized possessions
7. Saying goodbye to friends and family as if for the last time
8. Seeking out weapons, pills, or other ways to kill themselves

Tips for Talking to a Depressed Teen	
<b>Offer support</b>	Confirm with the depressed teen that you are fully there for them. Avoid asking a lot of questions (teens need space and don't like intrusiveness).
<b>Be gentle but persistent</b>	Because the subject can be hard for teens to hear, you may have to approach them more than once. Respect your child's comfort level while emphasizing your concern and willingness to listen.
<b>Listen without moralizing</b>	Resist any impulse to disapprove or pass judgment in response to what the teen tells you. Avoid offering unsolicited advice or making harsh demands that they get help.
<b>Validate feelings</b>	You cannot talk your teen out of his or her depression even if his or her feelings or concerns don't make sense to you. Acknowledge the pain and sadness he or she is feeling in order to build trust and to form a supportive connection.

- *Helpguide.org, Teen Depression: A Guide for Parents, Learn the Signs and How You Can Help Your Teen*, Melinda Smith, M.A. Suzanne Barston, and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. Last update: November 2013

### III. Making a Referral to a Professional

#### *When to Make a Referral to a Professional:* **Responding to Youth in Harm's Way**



- If the youth is in **“harm’s way”** or a **crisis state**. This is a state of emotional or physical distress where the child’s personal safety or that of another person is considered to be imminently at risk.
- **Examples include:** suicidal ideation, depression or anxiety connected with current or past trauma (abuse, rape, and severe depression), cutting behavior, violent or homicidal behavior or any other disposition that places the youth or another youth(s) in danger.

✓ **Red Alert Response:** When a youth is in “harm’s way” it is essential to intervene as quickly as possible.

Parents or guardians are to be notified in these situations **unless it is a case of child abuse (see reporting procedures listed on page 9).**

- It would be important to have a plan and procedure in place including a list of professional consultants to call on and a list of referral sources. Who do you consult in the interim?
  - Who do you need to notify inside the parish outside of the parish?
- ✓ It is customary to document in these situations
- the facts of the case
  - what response was taken
  - who was contacted
  - other relevant information.

***Some of the following tips may help to assist you in this process:***

1. Remember that it is not your responsibility to make a psychological judgment/diagnosis about the young person's state of mind.

2. Know your limitations as a pastoral care support person.

**You are expected**

- to listen attentively to spoken words and non-verbal body language that communicates difficulty coping or that suggests harmful activity to the person or to others.

- to offer encouragement and a supportive presence.

- to take the steps to help the young person receive professional help.

**You are not expected**

- to assist someone outside your range of knowledge and expertise.

Monitor your inner state: **if you feel overwhelmed as a listener or recognize talk or behavior that suggests harmful behavior, then a professional referral may be indicated.**

It is essential to inform the parish youth minister, your designated supervisor, or pastor immediately of such concerns. It is their responsibility to follow-up and track the response to the young person in crisis.

**How to Make Effective Referrals**

1. Display an attitude of sincere interest and helpfulness toward a person in need.

2. With minors, when their personal well-being and safety are in jeopardy, it is essential that parents are notified and are part of the referral process

3. Be specific regarding the behaviors that have raised your concerns. One way of introducing the topic of a counseling referral to a young

person and his parents is to summarize what you understand to be the problem. For example, "You sound very depressed about this death and have questioned whether "life is worth living".

4. Clarify the purpose of the referral to the young person and parents in simple language:

- a. to see someone trained in helping persons work through such difficulties
- b. to reestablish and maintain a personal and interpersonal sense of safety
- c. to provide assistance in managing pain associated with loss
- d. to help regain a sense of hopefulness and meaningfulness in life

5. Stress the seriousness of the situation and solicit their cooperation in securing the necessary help to address the situation. Establish a commitment from the parents and youth to make this contact with a promise of your own follow-up contact to ensure that it has occurred.

**Note:** Talking to a professional can elicit a variety of ambivalent reactions from people. Some include:

- a. *People will think we are crazy.*
- b. *We are very private people; it is very difficult to share such painful feelings with a stranger.*

Reassure them that counseling is not just for "crazy" people (most people have normal "problems in living"). Emphasize that counseling does provide a chance to explore feelings and solve problems with the help of an objective, sensitive, concerned listener, non-judgmental person who is professionally trained.

Resource adapted from *Best Practices Manual for Counseling Referrals*.  
Compiled by The North Carolina Community College System  
Department of Student Development Services, February 2008.



## **Responding to Reasonable Cause that Indicates Child Abuse**

- ✓ The law requires that suspected cases of abuse and neglect must be reported!
- ✓ You have 48 hours to report!
- ✓ (7 days a week 24 hours a day)
- ✓ The number for CPS in Texas is 1-800-252-5400; By internet: [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org). Internet reporting is reserved for professionals, teachers and clergy.

### **Some Things to Note:**

- ✓ **Do not make any attempt to investigate or inform the family of your report or what is suspected.** Avoid making promises to the child about what may happen. This is the responsibility of CPS and your good intentions may impede their investigation and cause further injury to the child.
- ✓ You have immunity from liability when reports are made as required by law and in good faith.
- ✓ If a CPS caseworker or law enforcement officer comes to the church, ask for their I.D. and note it. They may interview the child alone.

## IV. Community Crisis Care Organizations and Resources

### **Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**

- Adoption and Foster Care: 713-874-6547
- Pregnant & Parenting Adolescents: 713-874-6583
- Counseling In-Take Line 713-874-6590/ 866-649-5862
- Immigrant Legal Assistance 713-874-6511
- Senior Citizen Assistance 866-649-5862
- Transitional Housing for Women & Children 866-649-5862
- AIDS/HIV Ministry 713-874-6590
- Parish Social Ministry Training: 713-874-6623
- Refugee Resettlement: 713-874-6511

### **St Vincent de Paul Society-Houston**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Emergency food and clothing)  
2403 Holcombe Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77021  
(713) 741-8234  
<http://www.svdphouston.org/>

### **Conference/Parish St Vincent de Paul Locations-**

<http://www.svdphouston.org/documents/pdf2010/referral%20guide%202010.pdf>

### **DePelchin Children's Center – Counseling Referrals**

[www.depelchin.org](http://www.depelchin.org)

4950 Memorial, Houston 77007	<b>Central Intake:</b> 713-730-2335
1610 James Bowie Dr., Ste A-111, Baytown, 77520	281-427-1300
1300A Bay Area Blvd, Webster/Clear Lake, 77058	281-282-6062
10435 Greenbough, Stafford, 77477	281-261-0083
1600 Lake Front Circle, Ste 204, Woodlands, 77380	281-367-7707
710 S. 7 <sup>th</sup> Street, Richmond, 77469	281-342-4906

## **Family Services of Great Houston**

A United Way Affiliate

Services include: Counseling, Parent & Family Education, Marriage Education, Case Management, Car Loans, Veteran Services, Substance Abuse, and Financial Stability

[www.familyservices.org](http://www.familyservices.org)

English Call Center: 713-861-4849

Spanish Call Center: 713-861-4849

### **Administrative Office**

3815 Montrose, Suite 200

Houston, TX 77006

### **Bay Area District Office**

1300 Bay Area Blvd., Suite 230 A

Houston, TX 77058

### **Baytown District Office**

5313 Decker Drive

Baytown, TX 77520

### **Central Office**

4625 Lillian St.

Houston, TX 77007

### **Fort Bend District Office**

10435 Greenbough, United Way Building

Stafford, TX 77477

### **Montgomery County Office**

1600 Lake Front Circle

The Woodlands, TX 77380

**Waller County District Office**

531 FM 359 South, United Way Building  
Brookshire, TX 77423

**Alcohol and Drugs**

**The Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston**

303 Jackson Hill St.  
Houston, TX. 77007

Services for teens ages 13-17 include prevention education and intervention

[www.council-houston.org/parents/teen-services/](http://www.council-houston.org/parents/teen-services/)

Phone: 713-942-4100

**Teen Anxiety**

**Mental Health Mental Retardation Association (HMMRA) of Harris County**

Main office: 3630 Dallas (various services centers in the county)

**Crisis intervention (suicide help line):**

[www.mhmraharris.org/HelpLine.asp](http://www.mhmraharris.org/HelpLine.asp)

24-hour helpline: **713-970-7000 or 1-866-970-4770**

Services are for children and adolescents who have a significant mental health or behaviors disorders that effects the teen on a daily basis  
- Crisis counseling is also available with resources to stabilize the crisis

## **Suicide & Self Harm**

### **Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc.**

3701 Kirby Dr., Suite 540, Houston, TX. 77098

Office: 713-533-4508

Crisis Hotline: 713-HOTLINE 713-468-5463 [www.crisishotline.org](http://www.crisishotline.org)

**Teenline:** 713-529-TEEN 713-529-8336 [www.teenlinkhouston.org](http://www.teenlinkhouston.org)

Spanish Hotline: 713-526-8088

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

Enter zip code for service locations

[www.betasamhsa.gov/find-help](http://www.betasamhsa.gov/find-help)

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

## **Disaster Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990**

- Services: when stress, anxiety, depression occurs after natural or human-cause disasters. Also, a Faith-based and Community Initiative includes addressing substance abuse treatment

## **Grief & Bereavement**

Bo's Place

10050 Buffalo Speedway

Houston, TX 77054

Phone: 713-942-8339 713.942.2252 FAX

[info@bosplace.org](mailto:info@bosplace.org)

Services provide bereavement and grief support to children, ages 3 to 18, and their families who have experienced the death of a child or an adult in their immediate family, as well as programs for grieving adults.

Bo's Place also offers Community Education and Training opportunities for professionals and volunteers working to support those in grief.

**Others:** Abuse Resources, Eating Disorders- Anorexia & Bulimia, Disability Resources