



SWAMPSCOTT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As members of the Swampscott Public Schools Mental Health Task Force, we want to address the recently released Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. This series is based on a book of the same title, written by Jay Asher and published in 2007 and 2017. Because of its significant popularity and the serious issues explicitly depicted – including drug use, sexual assault, bullying, and suicide -- we feel it is important to provide some guidance about the series.

13 Reasons Why has several concerning themes:

- The series explicitly depicts a graphic death by suicide, and portrays it as the only viable option for the main character.
- There is no mention of mental illness, which is the leading cause of death by suicide.
- The adults in her life – her parents, school counselor, and school administrators -- fail the character and her peers over and over.
- There are no examples of appropriate or healthy coping strategies, nor is there any help-seeking that is successful.
- School mental health providers act in unethical and incompetent ways throughout the series.

We strongly urge you to talk with your children to see if they have read the book and/or watched the series. Anecdotally, we know that many students in grades 5 and above watched it over April vacation, frequently without their parents' knowledge. **We recommend special caution if your child is vulnerable or has had suicidal ideation.** It is a highly suggestive show and could be risky for adolescents who struggle with isolation or self-harming behavior.

School counselors and mental health professionals in our district are highly trained professionals whose competencies include working with susceptible students. Be assured that the district counseling professionals are thoughtful, intentional, and ethical in their everyday work with your children. The district has created resources specifically designed to address our most vulnerable students, such as the recently created SWIFT and Harbor programs at Swampscott High School, which will be replicated at Swampscott Middle School next year.

Should you have concerns about your child, please do not hesitate to contact the counseling

staff at your child's school. Also refer to the resources below. The mental health professionals, educators, and administrators stand ready to work with you and your child to keep them safe and healthy.

Sincerely yours,

Swampscott Public Schools Mental Health Task Force

RESOURCES

SPS Counseling Staff

Stanley Elementary School: Liam Hurley, lhurley@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Clarke Elementary School: Cathy Kalpin, kalpin@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Hadley Elementary School: Sara Landergan, landergan@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Swampscott Middle School: Kelly Ellison, ellison@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Michele Capozzi, capozzi@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Dylan Randall, randall@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Swampscott High School: Sarah Kelley, kelley@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Rachel Sturma, sturma@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Emily Zotto Barnum, zotto@swampscott.k12.ma.us
Julie Mazzola, mazzola@swampscott.k12.ma.us

Other Resources

Considerations for Educators and Parents: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

13 Reasons Why Talking Points: <https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-why-talking-points/>

What Parents Should Know About 13 Reasons Why: <http://riversidetraumacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/13ReasonsWhy.pdf>

Preventing Youth Suicide: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide>

Samaritans of Merrimack Valley: <http://www.samaritansusa.org/merrimack.php>

Samaritans of Boston:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/2/#inbox/15bb1125644d42c1?projector=1>

Eliot Emergency Psychiatric Services: <http://www.eliotchs.org/services/outpatient-services/emergency-services/>

The Swampscott Public Schools does not discriminate or tolerate harassment against students, parents/guardians, employees or the general public. No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to the Swampscott Public Schools, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of the Swampscott Public Schools on grounds of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, genetic information, ancestry, children, marital or civic union status, veteran status or membership in the armed services, receiving of public assistance, homeless, or handicap.