

Guidelines for suicide prevention

These guidelines follow the school's 8 Life Skills pedagogical project, which aims to teach students not only academic skills, but also life skills they can use throughout their lives. It encourages a way of life characterized by caring, cooperation, honesty, hope, self-control, perseverance, a critical spirit and tolerance. The key word is CONFIDENCE. Confidence in dealing with difficult issues, confidence in our approach, confidence in looking for external help.

1. Key facts about suicide

In Belgium, there are 5 cases of suicide every day. Research shows that follow-up and support is necessary due to the recurrence rate of 15% after the first attempt and 35% after the second attempt. Due to a certain vulnerability and stress factors, one can develop dark thoughts or suicidal thoughts. This means one is in tunnel vision, where one can no longer see any other solutions. There is a great hopelessness that makes one think this will never pass. Yet there is still a certain ambivalence, one does not want to die but one no longer sees any possibility of continuing to live in the current way. The desire for **another** life is often stronger than the desire to be dead. There is never just one cause but rather a combination - a complexity of different causes - present over a long period of time and often simultaneously!

2. Guidelines

For students who have suicidal thoughts, finding the right support and treatment to help them cope in a healthier way is essential. Early intervention and recognizing signs are indispensable in suicide prevention.

Dealing with dark thoughts and suicidal thoughts in a school environment is a delicate matter that needs sensitivity, empathy and knowledge of the right procedures. Here are some general guidelines:

For students with dark thoughts and suicidal thoughts

1. **Watch out for signs.** When you think about suicide, it often has an impact on your behavior as well. Therefore, be alert for changes in your behavior that may indicate suicidal thoughts, such as sleeping poorly, spending less time with people, not being able to concentrate at work or school, brooding a lot about suicide, drinking more alcohol and/or smoking, or not feeling like doing things you otherwise enjoy.
2. **If possible, talk to your parents** about what you need.
3. **Talk to someone you trust** to find support and understanding: a family member, a friend, a teacher, an educational adviser, a member of the Guidance Team....
4. **Seek professional help:** school nurses and school psychologists are there to help you. Outside school hours, specialized medical and psychotherapeutic care is available.
5. If you need immediate assistance, **consult your [safety plan](#)**. This contains specific information that may be of great importance to you personally such as healthy coping strategies to reduce danger and risk of attempting. These could include things like exercise, art, music, writing or spending time with friends and family.
6. **Take care of yourself:** sleep enough, eat well and do activities that bring you pleasure and joy.

For students who encounter a schoolmate with suicidal thoughts

1. **Recognise signs and take them seriously.** Some examples are: 'I'd like to sleep forever' or 'It all doesn't have to happen anymore'.
2. **Listen to them calmly** without moral judgement. Respect your friend's autonomy.
3. **Talk about it.** Engage in the conversation, for example using the following sentences: 'When you say it's been enough, do you mean you would rather be dead...?' or 'I hear you say you are tired of life, do you sometimes think about suicide too?'.
4. **Help them to see their dark thoughts not as an embarrassing secret**, but as a problem you want to solve together.
5. **Help and encourage them** to seek **support** and talk to an **adult you trust**: school nurse, school psychologists, teacher, educational adviser, Guidance Team member..., suggest going to someone together.
6. **As a friend, don't take everything on your shoulders**, but talk to an adult who can help you: educational adviser, teacher, member of the Guidance Team. Be aware that you cannot solve it on your own. Your friend needs professional help.
7. **Be confidential**, respect your friend's privacy and do not promise secrecy. Entrust follow-up to adults and professionals.
8. **Get support for yourself** by talking to an adult you trust.

For staff

1. **Recognise the signs:**
 - Truancy, reduced performance, attention problems, neglecting oneself, alcohol and/or drug use, eating problems, hot temper, ...
 - Crying, anger, anxiety, irritability, less energy, mood swings, ...
 - Withdrawal, isolation, fewer hobbies,...
 - Statements that indicate hopelessness such as "It's all pointless anymore", "I've run out", "I'm fed up"...
2. **Approach the pupil and listen actively:** if you suspect that a pupil is feeling poorly, approach the pupil in a non-judgmental and caring manner. The pupil should be given the opportunity to talk about his feelings and concerns in a safe and supportive environment. Acknowledge his feelings without being judgmental. Be empathetic and make it clear that you are concerned.

If you are not comfortable with this approach, consult the school nurses, the school psychologists or the Assistant Deputy Director (members of our Care Team).

3. **School-level help:**
 - If first aid is needed or there is an increased risk of an act, take the student to the infirmary.
 - Also refer to the school psychologist who can support the student to get appropriate treatment and external help.
4. **Encourage** the person to contact **specialized help**.

5. **Involve the environment.** The school nurses, psychologists and/or management will invite the parent(s)/carer(s) to school to inform them about the situation, get them to seek professional help and involve them in the external support plan.
6. **Be transparent.** Tell the student in advance who **to** talk to about the issue.
7. **Keep in touch.** Social isolation is a major risk factor for a suicide attempt. In contrast, social contact has a great protective effect. No matter how much a person shuts himself off from the outside world, the need for contact is human and always remains.
8. **Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.** The student's privacy should be respected, and information should only be shared with the Care Team and other trusted stakeholders. However, it is also important to balance confidentiality with the need to ensure the safety and well-being of the student.

Disciplinary notice

In addition to primary support and care, disciplinary measures must sometimes be taken simultaneously. For example, bringing sharp objects into school is not allowed. This may result in a disciplinary sanction.

Contacts at EEB2

Nurses:

- WOL-INFIRMERIE@eursc.eu, Tel.: 02 774 22 15

School psychologists:

- Tel.: 02 774 22 33

- Tel.: 02 774 22 62

Guidance Team:

Group of volunteer teachers and educational advisers skilled in coaching and listening to students in each language section. See members on posters in school or on the school website or contact WOL-GUIDANCE@eursc.eu.

Distress Intervention Team

Some staff members attended suicide prevention training in May 2024. They can share their expertise and knowledge and guide students in need.

Educational advisers:

- S1: 02 774 22 71

- S2: 02 774 22 72

- S3: 02 774 22 73

- S4: 02 774 22 74

- S5: 02 774 22 75

- S6: 02 774 22 76

- S7: 02 774 22 77

- Flex: 07 774 22 78/9

Contacts outside school

☎ 1813	mail@zelfmoordlijn.be chat via https://www.zelfmoord1813.be/	Suicide line (NL)
☎ 0800 32 123	https://www.preventionsuicide.be/ Anonymous online forum: www.preventionsuicide.be/forum	Centre de prévention du suicide (FR)
☎ 02 648 40 14	https://www.chsbelgium.org/	CHS Community Help Centre Helpline (ENG)
☎ 103	https://www.103ecoute.be/	Ecoute Enfants (for children, youth, and parents) (FR)
☎ 107	https://tele-accueil.be/	Telé-accueil (FR)
☎ 112	https://112.be/	Emergency number (NL)

Students can also put **apps** on their phones. The apps contain various tools that can help you overcome a crisis or prevent the next one. Also, if you want to be there for someone else, you can get started with these apps.

App NL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>BackUp</u> https://apps.apple.com/be/app/backup-door-zelfmoord-1813/id999043318 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=be.zelfmoord1813.backup ▪ <u>Red Cross - Hold-up app</u> https://apps.apple.com/us/app/houvast/id1533784893 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=be.rodekruis.houvast
App FR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Panique pass</u> https://apps.apple.com/fr/app/panique-pas/id1459513911 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.dontpanic&hl=fr
App ENG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>StayAlive</u> https://www.stayalive.app/ https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.org.suicideprevention.stayalive&hl=en_GB ▪ <u>Suicide Safe</u>

	<p>https://apps.apple.com/us/app/suicide-safe-by-samhsa/id968468139</p> <p>https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.hhs.samhsa.app.spa&hl=en_US</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virtual Hope Box <p>https://apps.apple.com/us/app/virtual-hope-box/id825099621</p> <p>https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=mil.dha.vhb&hl=en_US</p>
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Further reading

EN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.zelfmoord1813.be/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlalQobChMIyleejqqDhgMV66hoCR06zwCREAAAYASAAEgIAjvD_BwE
FR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.preventionsuicide.be/ ▪ https://www.preventionsuicide.be/sites/default/files/publication/CPS-GuidePreventionSuicide.pdf ▪ https://un-pass.be/
ENG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.chsbelgium.org/

Training offered to volunteering staff members

21 November 2023 - Webinar postvention - Centre de prévention du suicide
 9 & 11 January 2024 - Centre de prévention du suicide - Uccle EEB1
 1 February 2024 - Suicide prevention among secondary school students - CNO Antwerp
 13 & 14 May 2024 - Centre de prévention du suicide - Evere EEB2

A special thanks to our teacher, Mrs. Vangeneugden for writing this policy, as part of our EEB2 Mental Health Policy.