

Take Action for Athlete Suicide Prevention

A Roadmap for

Coaches

Student athletes and others count on you for guidance and support — on and off the field or court.

Talking about emotional and mental health is not always easy. Student athletes push themselves to succeed and may not reach out when they need help for themselves or a teammate. Several recent student athlete deaths by suicide have raised local and national attention. By recognizing the signs of suicidal thoughts and knowing where to turn for help, you have the power to help someone find their reasons for living.

How to Take Action for Suicide Prevention

Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and should never be ignored.

If you know that a student athlete is experiencing or talking about:

- Wanting to stop living
- Not seeing reasons to live
- Feelings of guilt, shame, or being a burden to others
- Having a sense of emptiness, hopelessness, or being trapped
- Periods of extreme sadness, anxiety, agitation, or rage
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain

Other warning signs can include:

- Having a plan for self-harm
- Giving away important possessions
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Sudden extreme mood changes
- Increased risk-taking, including abuse of alcohol or other drugs



Call or text 988, or chat at [988Lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) to connect to help 24/7

How to start a potentially life-saving conversation about suicide ►

Be Prepared: Have a list of crisis resources on hand. Practice what you will say. And make sure you have enough time and a safe space to talk.

Be Direct: You can ask the student questions like:

- "I feel like you haven't been yourself lately."
- "Do you want to talk about anything?"
- "Have you been having a tough time recently?"
- "Are you thinking of hurting yourself?"
- "I'm here for you. You are not alone."
- "Can you tell me how I can help?"

Listen: The student may give you their own reasons why they are thinking about living or dying. Validate that they are considering both options and underscore that living is an option for them.

Plan For Safety: Ask the student if they have access to any lethal means (weapons, medications, etc.) and find help to safely remove them. Ask the student if they have a specific plan for ending their life, and if they feel they might act on it. If the answer to both is "yes," seek immediate help. Stay with them, and do not leave them alone.

Get Help: Follow school protocols and connect the student directly and immediately to school-based supports such as the athletic director or counseling services. A conversation with parents/guardians is also warranted.



You are not alone in helping someone in crisis. There are many resources available to assess, treat and intervene. Call **988** for crisis counselors, and connections to intervention programs and more support available to you, as well as to the person experiencing the emotional crisis. The *Know The Signs* website ([SuicidelsPreventable.org](https://www.SuicidelsPreventable.org)) is also a great place to start.

TAKE ACTION

FOR MENTAL HEALTH

CHECK IN

LEARN MORE

GET SUPPORT

Take Action at
TakeAction4MH.com

Connect on social media
@TakeAction4MH

By recognizing the signs and knowing how to start a conversation about mental health and where to turn for help, you and your faculty, other coaches, parents and students have the power to help someone find their reasons for living.

You can also visit **TakeAction4MH.com** to check in, learn more, and get support for the mental health and well-being of your students.

We're all on
#TeamTakeAction4MH!



Funded by counties through the voter-approved
Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).