

Share this: Facebook's new tool to prevent suicide in kids

As a parent, hearing about a child who has committed suicide is shocking, heartbreaking and incomprehensible. Suicide can move you to tears whether it happens across the country or in your own community.

Suicide among kids is an epidemic in the U.S. and the [second leading cause of death in teens between the ages of 15 and 19](#), according to a recent report in the journal *Pediatrics*.

What's more, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), approximately 11 percent of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 ended their lives in 2013.

Although there are several risk factors for suicide attempts—a family history of suicide, a history of abuse and depression and anxiety to name a few, one that seems to be a common threat is bullying, and in particular, cyberbullying.

Not only is social media often a vehicle for bullying, but kids who are depressed, thinking about or planning to commit suicide will post an update about their thoughts on social media as freely as they do selfies.

Help for those who need it most—and their friends

In response to this troubling trend, in June [Facebook announced a new tool](#) in collaboration with the organizations Suicide Awareness Voices of America, Forefront and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, to support those who may have suicidal thoughts and their friends who hope to help.

The tool allows people to flag a friend's post that suggests or explicitly states that the person is suicidal. If the friend thinks it's an emergency, he or she is urged to call 911 immediately.

Otherwise, the friend can message the person or use suggested copy from Facebook, reach out to a mutual friend or a friend who lives nearby to ask for help, or chat or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The friend can also request Facebook review the post and offer support and resources to the person in need. The entire process is always confidential. Friends can also get updates on the person or speak with the help team at Facebook to get additional support.

After the post is flagged and the person logs into Facebook, he or she will receive a pop up message asking if they would like to message a friend, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, get tips and relaxing activities to help cope with difficult feelings and read stories from other people who have coped with depression or suicidal thoughts.

Suicide is a serious issue, but with the support of friends and a community who cares both online and off, kids in need can get the help they deserve.

If you are concerned that your child is having suicidal thoughts, take him or her to your local emergency room immediately or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Information about the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research at Nationwide Children's Hospital can be found at www.NationwideChildrens.org/Suicide-Prevention and information about treatment programs can be found at NationwideChildrens.org/Behavioral-Health.