

Mental Health America of WI

Suicide Prevention for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Youth

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What We Know About Suicide Rates Among D/HOH

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American Sign Language

- ASL is the first language for many D/HOH youth. English is a second language.
- There are certification standards for sign language interpreters.
- National Assn. for the Deaf considers ASL an evidence-based practice for mental health services to D/HOH clients.

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What We Know About Risk Factors for D/HOH Youth

- 70% of parents of D/HOH youth are not fluent in ASL.
- Language barriers lead to lower self-esteem and more difficulty developing bonds with adults or peers. Double stigma.
- D/HOH youth are at 2-3 higher risk of sexual abuse.

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What We Know About Risk Factors for D/HOH Youth

- There are few MH providers proficient in ASL or that even provide appropriate interpretation services.
- Assessment materials are not in accessible formats for D/HOH youth.
- Suicide hotlines are generally not accessible: D/HOH love using video over the Internet but this format is not available.

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Wisconsin School for the Deaf

- Applied for a mini-grant prior to when we had GLS grant. Continued as GLS grantee.
- Had experienced suicide losses among recent graduates, others in D/HOH community.
- Operated by DPI, which had a strong interest in suicide prevention.

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Suicide Prevention Activities

- Staff training and education.
- Parent education.
- “Scenarios” DVD: Working with interpreters.
- ASL version of SOS video.

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Issues in D/HOH Communications

- Misunderstandings about adequate communication.
- Use of non-certified interpreters.
- Inadequacy of closed captioning.
- Need for culturally appropriate scenarios.
- The challenge of signing.

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