



ORANGE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Paula E. Howard, Ed.D
Deputy Superintendent of Schools

Dear Parents and Guardians of Orange Students:

A new Netflix series, “13 Reasons Why,” debuted on March 31st, 2017. It has been trending both nationally and in our school community. The show is comprised of 13 episodes depicting strong and graphic themes of suicide, bullying, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, and other pressing social issues. While the show is completely fictional, mental health authorities and suicide prevention experts are concerned about the possible risks posed by sensationalizing and glamourizing youth suicide. The show **DOES NOT** address mental illness or depression. It **DOES NOT** present viable alternatives to suicide. The show **DOES NOT** encourage youth to seek help for any reason from their family, school counselors or mental health practitioners.

The staff members at Orange Public Schools are committed to working with parents to create an atmosphere that promote the well-being of our students. We are strongly suggesting that you, as parents and guardians, preview the show, “13 Reasons Why,” in order to decide if it is appropriate for your teen. If your teen is watching the series, we advise you to use the show as an opportunity to engage in an open and honest discussion about the difficult material contained in the show. Watch with your teen and note how they react, how they think, and how they feel about the various themes of the series. Some questions to consider discussing:

- What did this mean to you? What was the “takeaway” from the episode/series?
- How did it affect you? Your feelings? Your thoughts?
- What could Hannah have done to get the support or help in order to prevent her from taking her own life?
- What would YOU do if one of your peers was struggling emotionally?
- What do YOU do if you become stressed or are struggling?
- Who could you go to if you were feeling upset or experiencing any of these emotions?

Always take suicide risk warning signs seriously. Common signs include:

- Suicide threats; verbal and written, including online posts; ex: “I am going to kill myself”, “I need life to stop”, “I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up”
- Giving away prized possessions
- Preoccupation with death in conversation, writing, drawing, and social media
- Changes in behavior, appearance/hygiene, thoughts and/or feelings
- Emotional distress

Suicide is NEVER a solution. It is an irreversible choice regarding a temporary problem. There is help.

Most importantly, we need to be sure that both you, as parents and guardians, and our teens know how and where to get the help that they need. They should know that they can always safely discuss concerns with a school counselor. Please review the following websites for more information and resources:

- The JED Foundation
<https://www.jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13RW-Talking-Points-JED-SAVE-Netflix.pdf>
- The National Association of School Psychologists recommends information on Preventing Teen and Youth Suicide
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1(800)273-TALK
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- NJ Hopeline 1-855-NJ-HOPELINE
- You can also find additional information on the Orange School District website under the tab Parent and Students.

The school counselors are available to talk with students and parents about these important issues. If you have any immediate concerns for the safety and well-being of your child, please contact emergency services (911) or Samaritans Statewide Helpline 1(877)870-4673 for assistance.

Sincerely,



Franklin Tafur
Acting Supervisor of Guidance
Orange Public School District