



For Immediate Release

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The Child Center of NY Offers Free Screenings for Teen Suicide Risk in Queens

A Worldwide September 10th Effort Raises Awareness of Huge Threat to the Young

Most parents faithfully take their children to pediatricians, eye doctors, and dentists for regular check ups. And yet--even though suicide is the third cause of death for young people aged 15 to 24--parents remain reluctant to get their children's emotional well being checked by a professional.

On Friday, September 10th, The Child Center of NY will be making it easy for parents to take this important step, offering a free depression and suicide screening at three locations in Queens. Licensed therapists will administer the assessment, which is a simple question-answer survey called "About my Life" and can be completed and scored within 25 minutes. Depending on risk level or need, the practitioner will make an appropriate follow-up referral.

The screenings are offered in conjunction with World Suicide Prevention Day, which is sponsored by the World Health Organization. All three locations will provide information kits, produced by the New York State Office of Mental Health, to help parents recognize and respond to signs of depression and suicide risk in their children.

"As a parent, I understand that it's intolerable to think that your child is so depressed that he or she would consider taking his or her life," said Sandra Hagan, executive director of The Child Center of NY. "But our children depend upon us to notice things like changes in their eating and sleeping patterns. They need parents to reach out on their behalf for help. Together, we can make sure that not one more young life is lost."

The statistics about suicide are tragic and shocking:

- Approximately 150,000 New York teenagers attempt suicide each year, and 70 will die as a result (Center for Disease Control). For each death, there are an estimated 8 to 25 attempts.
- Suicide is now **the third leading cause of death among young New Yorkers ages 15-24** (National Center for Health Statistics).
- In New York State and nationally, **deaths by suicide outnumber deaths by homicide** (NYS Dept. of Health, National Institute of Mental Health).
- The national rate of **teen suicide has nearly tripled since the 1950's**. (Center for Disease Control's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control)

The good news is that suicides are preventable, and depression is successfully treated in 80 to 90 percent of cases. The first step is to get help from a professional

The Facts: Not Just Teen Moodiness

Many parents do not understand the seriousness of depression and assume that it is normal for adolescents and teenagers to be moody. The Child Center hopes to use September 10th as an opportunity to educate the community about the importance of children's emotional health and the seriousness of depression, which can lead adolescents and teens to drug abuse, school failure, and further problems. Studies show that as many as 20% of teenagers have a psychiatric illness with depression, anxiety and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder being among the most prevalent.

If you hear your children talking about death or suicide, take it seriously and get immediate attention. Have your children screened by your pediatrician or at The Child Center if you observe warning signs, which may include several of the following: Low energy, sleep problems, appetite changes, headaches, stomach aches, irritability, a desire to be alone, school cutting, drug abuse, an inability to concentrate or remember, a loss of interest in hobbies and pleasurable activities like sports or talking on the phone.

"We want to make parents, teachers, and community members more comfortable in understanding that there are a lot of people who are at some risk," said Anthony Reisman, associate executive director at The Child Center and coordinator of the screening effort. "We want to get people aware of the magnitude and scope this presents for adolescents, teens, and families, and let everyone know that there are resources for dealing with that kind of despair."

Who: Youth from ages 12 to 18,

What: Screening for Depression and Suicide Risk

When: September 10th

Where: *The Child Center's HALE Site, 9 to 5pm*
163-18 Jamaica Avenue, 4th Floor, Jamaica, [\(718\) 228-0720](tel:(718)228-0720)

The Child Center's Flushing Center, 9 to 5 pm
140-15B Sanford Avenue, Flushing [\(718\) 358-8288](tel:(718)358-8288)

The Beacon Center at Parsons School Complex, 9 to 3 pm
158-40 76th Road, Flushing [\(718\) 820-0760](tel:(718)820-0760)

Founded in 1953, The Child Center of NY is a multi-service agency that helps more than 17,000 children a year at 80 locations all over Queens. Services include: early childhood education, individual and family counseling, substance abuse treatment, child abuse prevention, and a wide range of youth development programs from after-school programs to vocational readiness. Services are offered in 35 languages.