

The teenage years typically are marked by turbulent emotions and stress. The Netflix series "13 Reasons Why" has highlighted the impact of bullying, sexual assault, violence, grief and teen suicide on students. If friends, parents, teachers and school counselors aren't prepared to intervene when a student needs help, problems can arise.

Personal struggles often come to light only in the public extremes, when an outburst, tragic event or television show forces us to stop and ask "Why?" The popularity of the series "13 Reasons Why" provides school counselors with an opportunity to have difficult conversations with students and, as needed, with staff members and parents. School counselors know students who struggle with social/emotional challenges are vulnerable to academic failure. Instinctively, others know this as well but often don't have the tools they need or realize school counselors can help.

School counselors have specific training to recognize warning signs, such as:

- ▶ changes in school performance (e.g. grades, attendance)
- ▶ changes in mood
- ▶ increased disciplinary problems at school
- ▶ complaints of illness
- ▶ problems experienced at home or family situations (stress, trauma, divorce, substance abuse, poverty, domestic violence)
- ▶ communication from teachers about problems at school
- ▶ withdrawal
- ▶ difficulty dealing with existing mental health concerns

▶ staff

What School Staff Members Need to Know About Issues Raised in "13 Reasons Why"

Warning signs – Educate school staff about the social/emotional concerns of students and the warning signs of bullying, sexual assault, other forms of violence, anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal ideation. Include recognition that environmental factors at school or home may cause or exacerbate a student's issues.

Where to go for help – Ensure all staff know to which school staff they should report concerns about students or staff (school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, administrators, etc.). Emphasize the importance of sharing concerns early before a serious issue arises.

How to reduce or eliminate stigma – Provide strategies school staff can use to help them recognize and eliminate stigma related to bullying, violence, sexual assault and mental health issues. Also, provide information in classrooms, the main office and throughout school facilities about social services available to students.

▶ parents

What Parents Need to Know About Issues Raised in "13 Reasons Why"

Warning signs – Share information with parents about the warning signs of bullying, sexual assault, other forms of violence, anxiety, stress, depression and suicidal ideation. Include recognition that environmental factors at school or home may cause or exacerbate social/emotional or mental health issues.

School resources – Let parents know school counselors and other school staff are resources to collaborate with on these types of issues. Reinforce that the goal is to help all students achieve success.

Community resources – Publicize community resources available for additional assistance including individuals and organizations providing support for those experiencing grief, victims of sexual assault and treatment of mental health issues including suicidal ideation and depression.

▶ students

What Students Need to Know About Issues Raised in "13 Reasons Why"

Warning signs – Share information with students about the warning signs of bullying, sexual assault, anxiety, stress, other forms of violence, depression and suicidal ideation. Emphasize that these signs should not be treated lightly, and they should let a trusted adult know immediately if they have concerns about themselves or others.

School resources – Provide information about behaviors and situations that create toxic school environments (bullying, sexual assault, violence, etc.). Let students know school counselors and other school staff are there to help. If they have any concerns about themselves or others, they should tell a teacher, school counselor or other trusted adult immediately.

Talk with parents/guardians – Encourage students to discuss concerns about themselves or others with their parents/guardians. If a student is reluctant to talk with a parent, help the student prepare to have the discussion.

Additional Resources

[The Role of the School Counselor](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and Student Mental Health](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and Trauma-Informed Practice](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and the Identification, Prevention and Intervention of Behaviors That Are Harmful and Place Students At-Risk](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and the Promotion of Safe Schools Through Conflict Resolution and Bullying/Harassment Prevention](#)

[13 Reasons Why Resources](#), Netflix (2018)

[Depression Resource Brochure](#)

[Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary and Resources](#)

[13 Minutes of 13 Reasons Why](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2017)

[Self-Esteem in a Social Media World](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2017)

[Lead Mental Health Efforts](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2014)

[Students With Depression: Help Them Find Their Way Out](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2014)

[Suicide: Err on the Side of Caution](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2013)

[Student Suicide: Legal and Ethical Implications](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2012)

[Mental health surveillance among children – United States, 2005-2011](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010).

Erickson, A., & Abel, N. R. (2013). [A high school counselor's leadership in providing schoolwide screenings for depression and enhancing suicide awareness](#). *Professional School Counseling*, 16(5), 283-289. doi: 10.5330/psc.n.2013-16.283

[Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#)

[Foundation for the Advancement of Alcohol Responsibility](#)

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)

[The National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

[CDC Fact Sheet on Underage Drinking](#)