



RIVERWATCH MIDDLE SCHOOL

Home of the Golden Panthers



Pam Bibik

Principal

John James

Assistant Principal

Precilla Saint Jean

Assistant Principal

Liz Tuck

Assistant Principal

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The adolescent years are marked by a roller coaster of emotions, which can be difficult for both students and their parents. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil, however, depression (among the most common of mental health issues) does occur in some adolescents. Depression, which is treatable, is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing issue among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Forsyth County Schools and Riverwatch Middle School offer depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. This program aims to increase help-seeking behaviors for students who are concerned about themselves or others. SOS is listed on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. In a randomized control study, the SOS High School Program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
- To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a trusted adult about concerns
- To teach students who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Riverwatch's counselors and school social worker will be presenting the SOS curriculum to the 7th grade students in November. Students will view segments from the SOS video to learn about the signs of suicide and risk factors, followed by a classroom discussion using the designed program. All students will then complete the Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression (BSAD) and indicate if they need to speak with a counselor about concerns for themselves or someone they know. We will have additional counselors and school social workers available at Riverwatch to ensure all students' needs are addressed in a timely manner.

At Riverwatch Middle School, it is our hope that all students are safe and happy while they are at school and at home. By implementing the SOS curriculum, we are proactively addressing the topic and signs of suicide with students. If you wish that your child NOT participate in the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program, please sign below. If you have any questions, please contact the RMS Counseling Department.

(Student Name)

(Homeroom Teacher)

_____ I **DO NOT** give permission for my child to participate in the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program.

(Parent Signature)

(Date)

******OPT OUT ONLY******

PLEASE RETURN By: Friday, November 4th

610 James Burgess Road Suwanee, Georgia 30024 (678) 455-7311