

September 14, 2022

Dear KJMS Parents and Guardians,

This school year, FCPS staff are working to teach students about mental health and how to seek help if they are worried about themselves or a friend. We are using a program called *Signs of Suicide (SOS)*. The program teaches students about this difficult topic and encourages them to seek help.

SOS has been used by thousands of schools over the past few decades. Studies have shown that it effectively teaches students about depression and suicide while reducing the number of students' self-reported suicide attempts.

Through the program, students learn:

- that depression is treatable, so they are encouraged to seek help
- how to identify depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- to ACT (Acknowledge, Care and Tell a trusted adult) if concerned about themselves or a friend
- who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Students will watch age-appropriate video clips that describe depression, suicide, and what to do if they are concerned about a friend. Following the video, students will complete a response slip which asks whether they would like to talk to an adult about any concerns. School staff will conduct brief meetings with any student asking to talk.

Following the video, students will complete a brief depression screening tool. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression but does indicate whether a young person should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional. School staff will partner with parents and guardians regarding referrals.

We encourage you to visit www.sosignsof suicide.org/parent for information on warning signs for youth suicide, useful resources, and some of the key messages students will learn. You can also view this [parent video](#) to learn more. At KJMS, 7th grade students participate in this program. Nearly all 8th grader students participated last year. This year, 7th graders will watch the video and take the screener on **October 11 and 13**. The schedule is based on the Team and TA Teacher assignment.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation in this program, please be in touch with your student's school counselor. If you would like to opt your 7th grade student out of this program, please use this [form](#) or contact Andrea Holmes aholmes@fcps.edu with the subject line: "SOS Opt Out."

Sincerely,

Kathryn Teague
Director of Student Services

FORM TO OPT-OUT OF SCHOOL-WIDE SOS WELLNESS EDUCATION AND SCREENING

Katherine Johnson Middle School (KJMS) is conducting Signs of Suicide (SOS) education and screening program with all 7th grade students. This free, voluntary, and confidential screening is offered to help determine whether or not students have symptoms consistent with depression, and to identify students at-risk of suicide. After the school-wide program and screener are conducted, members of the Student Services Department will follow up with families as necessary. Students may be opted out of this program at a parent/guardian's request.

In order to opt your 7th grade student out of this screening process, please complete this form and return it to Andrea Holmes, at KJMS by Friday, September 30.

This form should only be completed if you do NOT want your student to participate in this wellness education or screening.

Parent/Guardian name

Student Name

Grade

Signature of Parent of Guardian

Date

Email to:

Andrea Holmes aholmes@fcps.edu: Subject Line "**SOS Opt Out**"

Mail to:

Andrea Holmes
Katherine Johnson Middle School
3801 Jermantown Road
Fairfax, VA 22030