

Presenting Problem:

A participating PCP telephoned a consultation request to WICPCP, regarding a 13-year-old female patient scheduled for the afternoon. The patient's parent had called that morning to report her daughter had stated, "Maybe I should just kill myself!" following an argument about unloading the dishwasher. She relays that a 15-year-old classmate had just died of suicide a week before, and that she was scared for her daughter's safety. The PCP requests input on how to proceed.

Consultant's Response:

- Because 'suicide contagion' is a true risk factor, it is especially important to take this situation seriously, and to directly interview the patient as soon as possible.
 - Encourage the parent(s) to keep the patient within their sight prior to the appointment.
 - Call **988** or take the patient to an emergency department if imminent danger arises prior to the appointment.
 - It is particularly important to secure any weapons in the home (knives, guns) in effort to decrease risk.
 - Interview the patient, preferably without her parent in the room for at least part of the time.
 - [The Columbia Suicide Severity Screener \(CSSS\)](#) is a useful tool assessing for safety risk and can help guide decisions about the level of placement needed.

Teaching Points:

- 12 Things Parents Can Do to Help Prevent Suicide - [Teens and suicide: What parents should know](#)
 - If you see signs that your child's mental health is under threat, tune in and pay close attention.
 - Listen to you child even when they are not talking.
 - Realize that your child might be facing suicide risks you have not considered yet.
 - Try not to dismiss what you are observing as "teenage drama."
 - Do not risk the possibility of being wrong when a child makes comments about suicide. **Take every statement about suicide seriously.**
 - Respond with empathy and understanding.
 - Get professional help right away.
 - Remove or secure guns you have at home.
 - Do the same with other lethal tools and substances.
 - As your child enters treatment, focus on creating hope.
 - Encourage them to see family and friends.
 - Suggest exercise.
 - Encourage balance and moderation.
 - Remind each other that this will take time.

Resources:

- [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)
- More information on **suicide contagion** - [Teen Suicide Risk: What Parents Should Know](#)
- View information regarding additional [Risk factors, protective factors, and warning signs](#)
- Parents and teens facing racial stress can benefit from [Racial Stress and Self-care: Parent Tip Tool](#) offered by the American Psychological Association.