**“13 Reasons Why" Netflix Series, Season 2: Considerations**

Cincinnati Public Schools has recently become aware that a second season of the trending Netflix series 13 Reasons Why, will be released on May 18, 2018. The first season, released in March 2017, was virally popular among adolescents, and raised significant concerns for parents, educators, and mental health professionals because of its dramatic, often graphic portrayal of difficult issues such as sexual assault and suicide. The first season of this series revolves around 17-year-old Hannah Baker, who takes her own life and leaves behind audio recordings for 13 people who she says in some way were part of why she killed herself. Each tape recounts painful events in which one or more of the 13 individuals played a role. Netflix’s stated goal of sparking conversations about these very real issues is a good one. However, most experts believed that the intense handling of the content without appropriate safeguards (such as warning cards before each episode) had the potential to put some vulnerable youth at risk for emotional distress or harmful behavior, including increased suicide ideation and attempts. Details about the central themes of the second season have not been released, but it is anticipated that there will be a continuation of themes from the first season.

**Cautions**

With the recently announced release date of *13 Reasons Why, Season 2,* many adolescents may be watching, or re-watching , episodes from season one in preparation for this new season. We do not recommend that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation, watch this series. Its powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to romanticize the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies. They may easily identify with the experiences portrayed and recognize both the intentional and unintentional effects on the central character. Unfortunately, adult characters in the show, including the second school counselor who inadequately addresses Hannah’s pleas for help, do not inspire a sense of trust or ability to help. Hannah’s parents are also unaware of the events that lead to her suicide death.

While many youth are resilient and capable of differentiating between a TV drama and real life, engaging in thoughtful conversations with them about the show is vital. Doing so presents an opportunity to help them process the issues addressed, consider the consequences of certain choices, and reinforce the message that **suicide is not a solution to problems** and that help is available. **This is particularly important for adolescents who are isolated, struggling, or vulnerable to suggestive images and storylines.** Research shows that exposure to another person’s suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of death, can be one of the many risk factors that youth struggling with mental health conditions cite as a reason they contemplate or attempt suicide.

What the series does accurately convey is that there is no single cause of suicide. Indeed, there are likely as many different pathways to suicide as there are suicide deaths. However, the series does not emphasize that common among most suicide deaths is the presence of treatable mental illnesses. Suicide is **not** the simple consequence of stressors or coping challenges, but rather, it is most typically a combined result of treatable mental illnesses and overwhelming or intolerable stressors.

## Guidance for Families

1. Ask your child if they have heard or seen the series 13 Reasons Why. Please refer to the Talking Points documents for processing this TV show.
2. Know common warning signs which include:
   1. Suicide threats, both direct (“I am going to kill myself.”) and indirect (“I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up.”). Threats can be verbal or written, including online postings.
   2. Giving away prized possessions.
   3. Preoccupation with death in conversation, writing, drawing, and social media.
   4. Changes in behavior, appearance/hygiene, thoughts, and/or feelings.
   5. Emotional distress.
3. When warning signs are observed, take the following actions:
   1. Remain calm, be nonjudgmental, and listen.
   2. Avoid statements that might be perceived as minimizing the emotional pain (e.g., “You need to move on." or "You should get over it.”).
   3. Reassure the individual that there is help and they will not feel like this forever.
   4. Ask them directly if they have thought about suicide. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
   5. Provide constant supervision. **Do not leave the individual alone.**
   6. Without putting yourself in danger, remove means for self-harm, including any weapons the person might find.
   7. **Get help.** Never agree to keep a person’s suicidal thoughts a secret.
4. **Suicide is never a solution. It is an irreversible choice for a temporary problem. There is help. If you are struggling with thoughts of suicide or know someone who is, talk to a trusted adult, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text “START” to 741741.**

**Please refer to the “13 Reasons Why” Talking Points, which provides helpful guidance for issues portrayed in the series. Contact school mental health staff with questions or concerns (school psychologist, school social workers, partner mental health agency, etc) and/or your child’s pediatrician. Additional resources are available at www. CPS-k12.org, and mindpeacecincinnati.com.**