



## SOS Suicide Prevention Program 2000-2005

*An evidence-based, cost effective program of suicide prevention and mental health screening for secondary schools*

A Program of Screening for Mental Health, Inc. (SMH)  
 A non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization  
 Douglas G. Jacobs, MD, Founder & Executive Director  
 Barbara S. Kopans, Managing Director

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### Overview of the SOS Program

The SOS Strategy and Four-Pronged Safety Net

Used by more than 2000 schools nationwide

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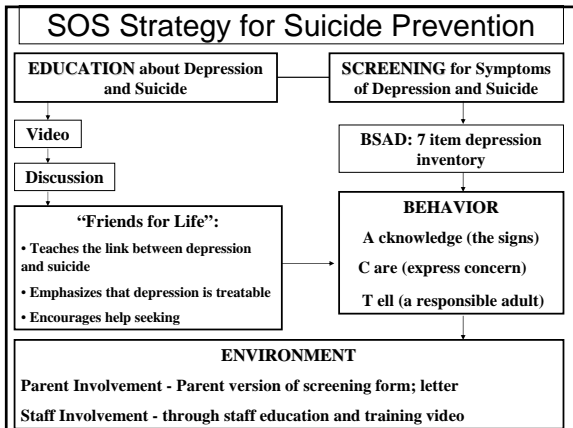
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## Evaluation of the S.O.S. Program

by participating school professionals

2001-2002

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### Analysis of School Demographics

- Mean Student Enrollment: 924
- Race:
  - 64% White
  - 12% Black
  - 10% Hispanic
  - 3% Asian
  - 2% Native American
- Locale:
  - 27% Urban
  - 33% Suburban
  - 41% Rural
- School Type:
  - 85% Public
  - 13% Private (day)
  - 2% Boarding
- Percent Qualifying for A Free or Reduced Price Lunch: 21%

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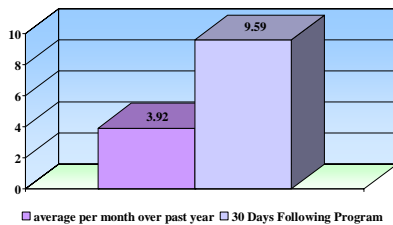
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### Average Number of Students Seeking Counseling for Depression/Suicidality



- 145% increase in help seeking 30 days following the program.
- This increase persisted into the 3-month follow up.

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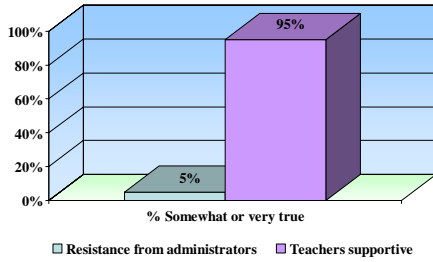
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### Support/Resistance for Program by School Personnel



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### Evaluation Summary

- School-based program evaluation showed SOS program was effective in initiating help seeking among students.
- Safe for students.
- Received and rated positively by users.

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### **SOS Student-Level Research Findings**

*"An Outcome Evaluation of the SOS Suicide Prevention Program"  
Robert H. Aseltine, Jr, PhD and Robert DeMartino, MD  
American Journal of Public Health, March 2004.*

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**First school-based  
suicide prevention program to  
demonstrate significant reductions  
in suicide attempts  
in a randomized controlled study**

*Student-Level Randomized Controlled Trial  
(n = 2100)*

*Outcomes Assessed 3 Months After Intervention*

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**Research Study  
Student Demographics**

- 5 Schools:
  - Hartford, CT
  - Columbus, GA
- ESL During High School
  - 82% No
  - 18% Yes
- Gender:
  - 49% Male
  - 51% Female
- Grade in School:
  - 65% Freshman
  - 20% Sophomore
  - 12% Junior
  - 18% Senior
- Race:
  - 17% White
  - 25% Black
  - 42% Hispanic
  - 10% Multi-ethnic
  - 6% Other

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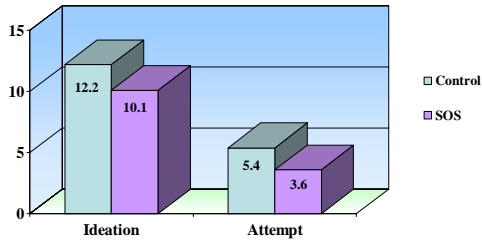
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**Effects of SOS Program on  
Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts**



**• 40% fewer suicide attempts among the students who completed the SOS program. Statistically significant at 0.05.**

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## Why Is It Important to Reduce Suicide Attempts in Adolescents?

Prior suicide attempts are the number one risk factor for suicide.

Condition	Relative Risk
Prior suicide attempt	38.4
Eating disorders	23.1
Bipolar disorder	21.7
Major depression	20.4
Mixed drug abuse	19.2

Adapted from A.P.A. Guidelines, part A, p. 16

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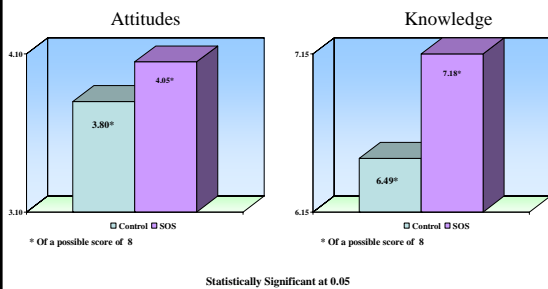
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## Effects of SOS Program on Knowledge and Attitudes About Depression/Suicide



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## Large-Scale SOS Initiatives

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**State and Countywide SOS Initiatives**

***Massachusetts: 2005***

Massachusetts Department of Public Health funding supported high schools using the SOS program.

*"The SOS program has been shown to reduce suicide attempts and empowers students by helping them understand the connection between undiagnosed and untreated mental illness and suicide."*

*- Alan E. Holmlund  
Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator  
MA Department of Public Health*

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**Statewide SOS Initiatives**

***Ohio: 2005***

An appropriation secured by Senator Mike DeWine will bring SOS to 300 schools and 100,000 students.

*"This proven program will help save the lives of our nation's teens and young adults by getting them the help they need."*

*- Senator Mike DeWine, R-OH*

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**Countywide SOS Initiatives**

***Tarrant County, TX: 2004***

A coalition of local organizations in Tarrant County brought the program to 54,000 students.

*"It's exciting to have a program that we can fully recommend to each school district in our area. We feel like we are taking steps to save young lives."*

*- Lauralee Harris, Executive Director,  
Mental Health Association of Tarrant County*

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## Implementation at State Level

- Provides customized program kits for all schools ( e.g. state-specific demographic questions can be added to screening forms to better evaluate results)
- Provides in-state training sessions and teleconferences
- Provides state-specific evaluation and results of the program delivered to the state agency overseeing the program
- Cost: Less than \$1 per student
- SOS can be implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act.

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## SOS Program Implementation *at the school level*

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## Program Components

Each school receives:

- Training Video and Implementation Manual
- Video and discussion guide – main teaching tools
- Depression Screening Forms (English and Spanish)
- Parent educational and screening materials (English and Spanish)
- Posters
- Educational Brochures
- Postvention Guidelines



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### Implementation Procedures

- Local school personnel implement the program with materials provided by SMH: School Psychologists, Health Educators, School Nurses, School Counselors, Student Assistance Professionals
- Usually implemented in one classroom period:  
Students view and discuss video in classroom  
Students complete screening form in classroom
- Entire student body or a select portion of student body may be screened (i.e. freshman) depending on the school's resources
- Screenings may be taken with or without identification
- Parent version of screening forms and information provided; assists in the identification of depression and suicidality and helps initiate family discussion
- Passive or active parental permission

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### Accessing Treatment

- Encourages student help-seeking

BASED ON THE VIDEO AND/OR SCREENING, I FEEL

I need to talk to someone ...

I do not need to talk to someone ...

ABOUT MYSELF OR A FRIEND.

NAME (PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_

HOMEROOM SECTION \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE, YOU WILL BE CONTACTED WITHIN 24 HOURS. IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE SOONER, PLEASE APPROACH STAFF IMMEDIATELY.

- Encourages collaboration with local mental health facilities and individual professionals for increased access to treatment

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### Alternative Settings for SOS

- Church youth groups
- Juvenile justice settings
- Social and support groups for youth

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***NEW! 2005***  
**Booster Program for Graduating Seniors**

- Reinforces messages of the SOS program
- Teaches students how to access resources on college campus or in the community
- Provides resources for parents to aid in communicating with children about mental health issues when away from home
- Short video and discussion guide
- Includes depression screening

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**SOS Program for Middle Schools**

***IN DEVELOPMENT***

- An age-appropriate (6th,7th graders) version of the high school program
- Will be available for the 2006-2007 School Year

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