A study to evaluate the effects of the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program in middle schools found that, three months after completing the program, children who participated in SOS were significantly more knowledgeable about suicide and depression than children who had not participated in the program. Children who reported suicidal ideation prior to participating in the program were 96 percent less likely to report suicidal behaviors (ideation, planning, and attempts) three months after participating in SOS than children with prior ideation who had not participated in the program.

The impact of the SOS program on the prevalence of suicidal behaviors among middle school students with prior suicidal ideation is a finding unique to this study, and the researchers note that it needs replication. When the effect on all the children was analyzed, children who participated in SOS were not significantly less likely to report suicidal behaviors than children who had not participated in SOS. There were also no significant differences in help-seeking behaviors between children who had participated in the program and children who had not.

This study involved fifth- to eighth-grade students at middle schools with a relatively high percentage of students with parents in the military. These schools were chosen because “high military impact” schools like these may, in the words of the authors, “be in particular need of efficacious suicide prevention efforts because many risk factors for adolescent suicide are consequences of, or inherent in the experience of, parental deployment.” Such risk factors include family conflict and depression and anxiety in both the children and their non-deployed parents.

This summary is from: Schilling, E., Lawless, M., Buchanan, L., & Aseltine, R. H. (2014). “Signs of Suicide” shows promise as a middle school suicide prevention program. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior 44(6), 653-657.