



Los Angeles Unified School District  
**Student Health and Human Services**  
School Mental Health

333 S. Beaudry Avenue, 29<sup>th</sup> Floor  
(213) 241-3841  
smh.lausd.net | ccis.lausd.net



# Self-Injury Awareness for Staff

**Self-injury** is a complex behavior, separate and distinct from suicide that some individuals engage in for various reasons such as: to take risks, rebel, reject their parents' values, state their individuality, or merely to be accepted. However, others may injure themselves out of desperation or anger to seek attention; to show their feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness; or because they have suicidal thoughts. Such individuals may suffer from serious mental health disorders such as depression or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some young children may resort to self-injurious acts from time to time but often grow out of it. Children with an intellectual disability or autism, as well as children who have been abused or abandoned may also show these behaviors. If you become aware that a student or someone you know is engaging in self-injurious behavior, take action and get help.

## General Information

- Self-injury provides a way to manage overwhelming feelings and can be a way to bond with peers (rite of togetherness).
- Self-injury is defined as intentional tissue damage that can include cutting, severe scratching, pinching, stabbing, puncturing, burning, and ripping or pulling skin or hair.
- Tattoos and body piercings are not usually considered self-injurious behaviors unless they are done with the intention to hurt the body.
- Individual mental health services (therapy) can be effective when focused on reducing the negative thoughts and environmental factors that trigger self-injury.

## Here's What You Can Do:

### LISTEN

- Assess for suicide risk.
- Listen without judgment.
- Ask open-ended questions, such as:
  - *Tell me what happened?*
  - *How long have you been feeling this way?*
  - *Have you thought about suicide?*

### PROTECT

- Take action immediately and get help.
- Do not leave the student alone. Student should be supervised/monitored by a staff member, not a peer.
- Consider developing a safety/re-entry plan.
- Be cautious about giving punishments or negative consequences for the self-injurious behavior, as these may unintentionally encourage the behavior to continue.

### CONNECT

- Connect the student with an administrator, crisis team member, or the Suicide Prevention Liason(s) at your school to access and determine level of risk.
- Contact the Local District School Mental Health Coordinator or Mental Health Consultant for consultation and support.
- Contact the Department of Mental Health, law enforcement, or child protective services, as needed.

- Inform the parent/caregiver.
- Identify staff to monitor the student, as needed.

### MODEL

- Remain calm and establish a safe environment to talk about self-injury.
- Be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions about this behavior.
- Be aware of your tone. Displaying judgment, expressing anger or shock can cause the student to feel guilt or shame.

### TEACH

- Provide information and education to parents/caregivers about suicide and self-injury.
- Teach students how to ask for help and identify adults they can trust at home and at school.
- Teach healthy ways to cope with stress, including deep breathing, writing/drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Provide options for school and community resources, including referrals to professional mental health services.

**Follow the protocols and guidelines  
in BUL 2637 Suicide Prevention,  
Intervention and Postvention**

# Mental Health (MH) and Wellness Centers



## North

### Valley MH Center

6651A Balboa Blvd., Van Nuys 91406  
Tel: 818-758-2300

## West

### Crenshaw MH and Wellness Center

3206 W. 50th St., Los Angeles 90043  
Tel: 323-290-7737

### Washington MH and Wellness Center

1555 West 110th St., Los Angeles 90043  
Tel: 323-241-1909

## South

### 97th Street MH Center

Barrett Elementary School  
439 W. 97th St., Los Angeles 90003  
Tel: 323-754-2856

### San Pedro MH Center

704 West 8th St., San Pedro 90731  
Tel: 310-832-7545

### Locke MH and Wellness Center

316 111th St., Los Angeles 90061  
Tel: 323-418-1055

### Carson MH and Wellness Center

270 East 223rd St., Carson 90745  
Tel: 310-847-7216

## East

### Bell/Cudahy MH Center

Ellen Ochoa Learning Center  
7326 S. Wilcox, Cudahy 90201  
Tel: 323-869-1352

### Ramona MH Center

231 S. Alma Ave., Los Angeles 90063  
Tel: 323-266-7615

### Gage MH and Wellness Center

2880 E. Gage Ave., Huntington Park 90255  
Tel: 323-826-1520

### Elizabeth LC MH and Wellness Center

4811 Elizabeth St., Cudahy 90201  
Tel: 323-271-3650

## Central

### Belmont MH and Wellness Center

180 Union Place, Los Angeles 90026  
Tel: 213-241-4451

### Roybal MH Center

1200 West Colton St., Los Angeles 90026  
Tel: 213-580-6415

For clinic referrals visit:  
[smh.lausd.net](http://smh.lausd.net)

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# Signs and Symptoms of Self-Injury

- Frequent or unexplained bruises, scars, cuts, or burns
- Frequent inappropriate use of clothing designed to conceal wounds (often found on the arms, thighs, or abdomen)
- Unwillingness to participate in activities that require less body coverage (swimming, physical education class)
- Secretive behaviors, spending unusual amounts of time in the bedroom, bathroom, or isolated areas
- Bruises on the neck, headaches, red eyes, ropes/clothing/belts tied in knots (signs of the “choking game”)
- General signs of depression, social-emotional isolation, and disconnectedness
- Possession of sharp objects (razor blades, shards of glass, thumb tacks)
- Evidence of self-injury in drawings, journals, pictures, texts, and social networking sites
- Statements of helplessness, hopelessness, or worthlessness

## Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

There is a difference between self-injury and suicidal acts, thoughts, and intentions. With suicide, there is an intent to die; whereas, with non-suicidal self-injury the reasons may include to:

- Feel emotionally better
- Express desperation or anger
- Manage painful feelings of current or past trauma
- Punish oneself
- Feel pain or relief
- Have control of one’s body

A professional clinical assessment may be necessary to determine risk.



## What should I do if a student is engaging in self-injurious behavior?

- Respond immediately
- Supervise the student
- Escort the student to a Crisis Team Member
- Contact the appropriate child protective agency when there is reasonable suspicion of abuse (see BUL-1347)

### EMERGENCY INFORMATION / After Hours Services

If you need IMMEDIATE help, call 911.

Los Angeles School Police Department (213) 625-6631.

For a psychiatric emergency, contact the Department of Mental Health 24-hour ACCESS Center at (800) 854-7771.

## Resources for Parents/Caregivers & Children/Adolescents

### Community Hotlines

Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Hotline  
(877) 727-4747 (24-hour)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
(800) 273-TALK (8255) (24-hour)

Trevor Lifeline (866) 488-7386 (24-hour)

Teen Line (800) 852-8336 (6pm-10pm daily)

### Text and Chat Resources

Crisis Text Line – Free, 24/7, confidential  
Text LA to 741741

Crisis Chat (11am-11pm, daily)  
<http://www.crisischat.org/chat>

Teen Line - text “TEEN” to 839863 (6pm- 10pm)

### Online Resources

<http://www.didihirsch.org/>

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

<http://teenline.org/>

<http://www.afsp.org/understanding-suicide>

### Smartphone Apps

MY3

Teen Line Youth Yellow Pages

