



CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Box 2222, 2755 Highway 43 - Kemptville, Ontario - K0G 1J0
Phone: 613-258-7757 Toll-Free: 1-800-443-4562 Fax: 613-258-7134
www.cdsbeo.on.ca



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Dear Parents,

As you may be aware, Netflix has released a series entitled, *13 Reasons Why*. The series depicts the story of a high school student who dies by suicide, leaving behind recordings sharing the reasons she perceived led to her death. The series is not recommended by mental health professionals for youth to watch as it sensationalizes the act of suicide, which could lead to vulnerable students being at risk.

The Board wanted to advise parents and families that this material is not recommended as it does not address mental illness, or present alternatives or ways to seek support from mental health professionals. Psychologists identify that this series can lead to misconceptions and misinformation and can be detrimental and possibly add to the contagion effect. For these reasons, mental health professionals feel it is necessary to make you aware of this series and its troubling content.

You may wish to ask your child if they have heard of or seen this series. The following are suggestions which may help with the conversation:

- Identify that the series is fictional and includes many unrealistic elements.
- Let them know that school counsellors are professionals, trustworthy and that their depiction in the series wasn't accurate.
- Remind them to always seek support if they need it from family members, counsellors, coaches, teachers, faith leaders, a crisis line like Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868, etc. The Board Empower App identifies mental health resources in each school area.
- Let them know that it is normal to experience periods of stress and distress. Offer healthy coping strategies, e.g. exercise, talking to friends, exploring nature. Model this for your children.
- Talk openly about emotional distress and suicide. Doing so, doesn't make someone more suicidal. If you have concerns about your child's mental health, see your family physician and speak to your child's principal or vice principal right away.
- If the concern is more urgent call the Crisis Response Service, (1- 866-996-0991 in Prescott Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and 1-800-465-4442 Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Counties), or take your child to a hospital emergency department or call 911.
- Take all questions seriously and know that CDSBEO staff are here to support you and your family.

As always, if you have individual concerns about your child related to mental health, or need additional resources, please contact your child's school. Thank you for working with us to support student mental health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donaleen Hawes, C. Psych.
Superintendent of School Effectiveness