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 McLean High School

FAIRFAX COUNTY 1633 Davidson Road

PUBLIC SCHOOLS McLean, Virginia 22101

 703 714-5700

 703 714-5797 FAX

October, 2018

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The teen years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions that can make life challenging for students, parents, and school staff. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression is among the most common mental illnesses impacting teens. Fairfax County’s 2016-2017 Youth Survey results indicated that approximately 22 percent of McLean’s 10th graders and 29 percent of McLean’s 12th graders reported experiencing depressive symptoms in the past year. While these percentages represent improvement over past survey data, we want to make sure we identify students who need help as early as possible.

In order to proactively address this issue, McLean High School will be offering the Acknowledge, Care & Tell program to all 9th grade students. This is an evidenced-based prevention program that has been helpful in identifying students who are struggling with depression and in connecting students and families to resources for their specific needs. The program has been used by hundreds of schools for more than a decade and has proven successful in educating school communities and increasing student referrals when they are concerned about signs of depression in themselves or a friend.

Our goals in offering this program to students are straightforward:

* To help your student recognize the signs of depression and understand that depression is a treatable illness.
* To impress upon teens that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns.
* To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression.

Students will watch a 25-minute video called “Friends for Life” followed by a discussion facilitated by an MHS counseling or clinical staff member. After the discussion, students will complete a brief adolescent depression screening tool. The depression screening tool that we are using addresses thoughts and feelings that a parent may be unaware his/her child is having. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression, but it does give an indication of whether a young person should be referred for an evaluation by a mental health professional. If follow up is indicated, parents will be notified about his/her child’s screening results and recommendations will be provided as needed. No documentation of your son/daughter’s involvement in this program will be placed in his/her school records. For parents who would like to screen the video prior to their teenager’s participation in the program, we will conduct a screening on Monday, November 5th at 3:05 PM in the McLean Student Services Office. Please call or email me, Paul Stansbery, to let us know if you plan like to attend.

If you do not want your daughter/son to participate in the Acknowledge, Care & Tell program, **please complete the opt-out form below and return it to the Student Services Office at McLean, by Tuesday, November 6.**

If you have any questions or concerns about this program or the screening form, please contact Paul Stansbery (703-714-5740, pwstansbery@fcps.edu) Beth Werfel, School Psychologist (703-714-5756, bawerfel@fcps.edu) or Marly Jerome-Featherson, School Social Worker (703-714-5708, mjeromefeath@fcps.edu).

Sincerely,

Paul Stansbery

Director of Student Services



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**Acknowledge, Care & Tell Opt-Out Form**

I do **not** wish for my child, to be screened for depression and participate in the Acknowledge, Care & Tell program at McLean High School November 7-14.

Parent/Guardian Name Parent/Guardian Signature Date

**(Please return this form in person or by mail to the Student Services Office by Tuesday, November 6.)**