



## Mount Pleasant Area School District

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This correspondence is to help make you aware of a highly publicized fictional series on Netflix entitled "**13 Reasons Why**". There are thirteen episodes in the series that tragically ends with the main character, a high school teenager, taking her own life. Prior to her death, the teen recorded thirteen audio cassettes that implicated thirteen people responsible for her life's end. Included in the recordings were details of sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, bullying and suicide. The TV rating for the series is TV-MA, for Mature Audiences. Not only does the show depict suicide in a graphic nature, it gives the impression that suicide is "*the answer*" to dealing with difficult situations.

It appears that many school aged children, mostly junior high and senior high, are watching the series and discussing its contents with one another. Although the series is fictional, many young people can easily relate to the experiences because they are exposed to them in everyday life. The message sent through the series is in stark contrast to the one we promote to our students about suicide and appropriate means to handle challenging situations. There is a growing number of students currently discussing the series and its content through social media and other means. We believe it is important for parents and guardians to be aware of what your children may possibly be watching and enable you to make informed decisions about how you best wish to handle that at home. Some students may struggle with their own emotional response to this series and confuse fiction with reality.

The Mount Pleasant Area School District cherishes its partnership with our families and are committed to the safety and well-being of all students. Our staff have training relative to identifying risk factors and our students are made aware of how to best communicate any concerns about themselves or others. School counselors, school psychologists, social workers, teacher and administrators are available to support students who wish to speak to someone about any thoughts or feelings they that may need addressed. We have a Student Assistance Program (SAP) in each of our buildings that takes referrals from parents, teachers and/or through self-referral. The SAP provides students with support relative to social and/or emotional need. We also have a mental health liaison available to provide further evaluations and outside resources as needed.

Attached is a **Guidance for Families**, provided by the National Association of School Psychologists, as well as a list of additional resources that you may find helpful. Please feel free to contact your child's counselor if you have any additional questions or concerns,

Respectfully,

Dr. Timothy M. Gabauer  
Superintendent

## Guidance for Families

1. Ask your child if they have heard or seen the series *13 Reasons Why*. While we don't recommend that they be encouraged to view the series, do tell them you want to watch it, with them or to catch up, and discuss their thoughts.
2. If they exhibit any of the warning signs above, don't be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide or if someone is hurting them. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
3. Ask your child if they think any of their friends or classmates exhibit warning signs. Talk with them about how to seek help for their friend or classmate. Guide them on how to respond when they see or hear any of the warning signs.
4. Listen to your children's comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and remember what is being said. Put your own agenda aside.
5. Get help from a school-employed or community-based mental health professional if you are concerned for your child's safety or the safety of one of their peers.

*Taken from: National Association of School Psychologists. (2017). 13 Reasons Why Netflix series: Considerations for educators [handout]. Bethesda, MD: Author.*

## Additional Resources:

<https://www.save.org/13-reasons-why/>

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

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK)

Crisis Text Line - text "HOME" to 741-741

## WESTMORELAND COUNTY SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES:

Westmoreland County Crisis Hotline (800) 836-6010

Mobile Crisis Services (724) 552-0305

Excelsa Health Latrobe Hospital (724) 537-1650

Crisis Walk-In Service (724) 782-4465

Excelsa Behavioral Health Crisis Response Center

532 W. Pittsburgh Street

Greensburg, PA 15601

*(Located on Depot Street directly across from Westmoreland Hospital)*