

## 13 Reasons Why: The upcoming second Season

### Guidance for families

The first season of 13 Reasons Why, which was virally popular among adolescents, raised significant concerns for parents, educators, and mental health professionals because of its dramatic, often graphic portrayal of difficult issues such as sexual assault and suicide. Most experts believed that the intense handling of the content without appropriate safeguards has the potential to put some vulnerable youth at risk for emotional distress or harmful behavior, including increased suicide ideation and attempts.

**It is important to know that there are indications that young people are watching or rewatching the first season in order to “be up to speed” for the second season.** It is strongly recommend that vulnerable youth (such as those struggling with depression, previous suicidal behavior, or trauma) not watch the first season, and most certainly not alone. It is important for adults to be aware of what the children and youth in their care are watching. This includes monitoring access to content via computers and mobile devices.

If students express their interest in watching the series, parents are encouraged to watch the series with their child; children and youth who view this series may need supportive adults to help process it. Students might need help articulating their perceptions when viewing controversial content. The difficult issues portrayed do occur in schools and communities, and it is important for adults to listen, take adolescents’ concerns seriously, and be willing to offer to help.

### Guidance for Families

1. Ask your child if they have heard or seen or planning to watch the series *13 Reasons Why*. If students express their interest in watching 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 (see Warning Signs below), 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 (see below).
4. Listen to your children’s comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what is being said.
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.
6. **Get immediate help if a suicide threat seems serious.** Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

### Warning Signs

**Always take warning signs seriously.** Common signs include:

- Suicide threats, both direct (“I am going to kill myself.” “I need life to stop.”) and indirect (“I need it to stop.” “I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up.”). Threats can be verbal or written, and they are often found in online postings.

- Giving away prized possessions.
- Preoccupation with death in conversation, writing, drawing, and social media.
- Changes in behavior, appearance/hygiene, thoughts, and/or feelings. This can include someone who is typically sad who suddenly becomes extremely happy.
- Significant emotional distress.

### **Suggested Resources**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text “START” to 741741

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](https://afsp.org/) <https://afsp.org/>