



What is the Star-Center?

Services for Teens at Risk (STAR-Center) was founded in 1986 by a Pennsylvania General Assembly subcommittee to investigate teen suicide. Since its inception, the STAR-Center's outpatient clinic has assessed and treated more than 9,000 adolescents who were at risk for suicide.

The STAR-Center specializes in preventing and treating suicidal behaviors, depression, and anxiety in young adults, teens, and preteens through clinical services, educational outreach, professional training, support groups, and research efforts.

STAR-Center
UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital
3811 O'Hara St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-864-3346 (Outreach)
412-246-5619 (Clinic)
starcenter.pitt.edu

How to Reach Us

STAR-Center Outpatient Clinic
Phone: 412-246-5619 (from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
Fax: 412-246-5610

STAR-Center Outreach
Phone: 412-864-3346 (from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
Fax: 412-246-5344

In an emergency, or evenings, weekends, and holidays, call resolve Crisis Services at
1-888-7-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226).

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STAR-Center Services for Teens at Risk

A SPECIALTY CLINICAL,
TRAINING, AND
RESEARCH PROGRAM

Recognizing Depression

Suicidal thoughts and behaviors among teenagers have risen dramatically in the past two decades. One way to combat teen suicide is to learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of depression.

Everyone has the blues now and then, and teenagers are no exception. But depression is much more severe than an occasional low mood. Adolescent depression is a chronic condition that often is linked to difficulties in school and personal relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, and/or suicide attempts or death of a friend by suicide.

Learn to Recognize Signs of Depression

- Inability to enjoy things that were once fun
- Changes in sleep habits
- Sad, low, or irritable mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Feelings of guilt
- Low self-esteem
- Thoughts of death or suicide

If a person has shown these symptoms for two or more weeks, they may have depression. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Or worse — the individual may see suicide as the only way out.

Young people may have suicidal thoughts or plans in the absence of clear symptoms of depression, and they also should be evaluated.

Anxiety is another contributor to suicidal risk and often manifests before, or at the same time as depression. Anxiety may include:

- Frequent worries about performance
- Excess concern about negative judgment from peers
- Reluctance to speak or interact with others
- Physical symptoms such as sweating or increased heart rate
- Avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations

In addition to having issues with depression and anxiety, youth who are suicidal often have:

- Difficulty tolerating distress
- Trouble regulating their emotions
- Other emotional and behavioral disorders (alcohol and substance use, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, etc.)
- Sleep difficulties

Turn to STAR for help

Young adults, teens, and preteens who are at risk for suicide may be eligible for treatment at the STAR-Center.

What We Offer

Assessment and Outpatient Treatment

- Complete psychiatric evaluation, risk assessment, and comprehensive treatment program.
- Outpatient treatment with cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and/or medication for youth ages 11 to 18 with depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior.
- In our treatment approach, we address the psychiatric problems, like depression and anxiety, and also address other contributors to suicidal behavior, such as emotion dysregulation or sleep difficulties.

Intensive Outpatient Program

The Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) is for teens ages 13 to 18 who require a higher level of care than weekly outpatient treatment. Teens in the IOP attend treatment nine hours per week (three hours each day for three days). Treatment consists of skills group where they are provided with support and learn cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills. Additionally, IOP provides weekly individual therapy and medication management. The average length of treatment is four to six weeks. After IOP, patients may return to a community clinician or continue treatment at STAR.

College Option - Services for Transition-Age Students at Risk (CO-STAR)

The STAR-Center partners with local colleges and universities by providing rapid and comprehensive assessment and treatment for depressed, anxious, and suicidal undergraduate (ages 18 to 24) college students. Participants in the CO-STAR IOP attend treatment nine hours per week (three hours each evening for three evenings), and treatment consists of skills group, individual therapy, and medication management sessions with a psychiatrist. The average length of treatment is four to six weeks. After treatment, we help the college student transition to a community provider.

Educational Parent Support Group

STAR-Center provides a weekly parent psychoeducational group for our outpatient and IOP families called "Parents as Partners" to teach parents about the symptoms, causes and treatments of depression.

Community Awareness Education

STAR-Center offers on-site training programs and workshops designed specifically for school personnel, community organizations, and mental health agencies and groups.

Postvention Activities

STAR-Center consults with communities and schools immediately following a suicide or other tragic loss to help implement support services for students and staff. This type of service is known as postvention because it happens after the tragedy.

Survivors of Suicide

This support group is for family members who have lost a loved one to suicide. The group provides a safe environment for survivors to voice the painful feelings that suicide leaves in its wake.

Other Resources

STAR-Center provides an array of educational materials about teen depression and suicide for families, educators, and professionals. These are available for download at no charge by visiting our website at starcenter.pitt.edu.

Research Efforts

STAR-Center faculty lead research projects focused on improving the understanding of youth depression and suicide, and identifying novel prevention and intervention approaches. Some examples of recent STAR-Center research studies include:

- *Development and testing of a brief app-based safety planning intervention for teens*
- *Understanding how sleep problems contribute to risk for youth suicide*
- *Prediction of suicidal risk using neuroimaging, blood tests, and data from health care records and mobile phones.*

To learn more about our ongoing research, please visit: starcenter.pitt.edu

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