

## 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

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## STAR-Center Services for Teens at Risk

A specialty clinical, training,  
and research program of  
UPMC Western Psychiatric Hospital



## Recognizing Depression

Suicide among teenagers has seen a dramatic rise in the past few 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 by suicide by friends.

## 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, he or she may be suffering from depression. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Or worse — he or she may see suicide as the only way out.

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

## 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 and/or medication for youth ages 7 to 18 with depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior.

### 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 nine hours per week (three hours each day for three days) and 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.

### 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 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 *monthly* parent psychoeducational group for our outpatient 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 to help implement support services for students and faculty. This type of action is known as postvention because it happens after the incident.

## 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](http://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*
- *Examination of the role of sleep disturbance as a risk for youth suicide*
- *Determination of brain-based neural patterns that identify suicidal individuals*

To learn more about our ongoing research, please visit: [starcenter.pitt.edu](http://starcenter.pitt.edu)

David A. Brent, MD, Director  
Tina R. Goldstein, PhD, Associate Director  
Paula S. McCommons, EdD, Outreach Director  
Kimberly D. Poling, LCSW, Clinical Program Manager

## 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)**.