



## **Tantasqua Regional/School Union 61 Districts**

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to bring to your attention a new Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*, that has gained a lot of attention amongst children and adolescents. The trending series is based on a young adult novel by the same name and revolves around a 17 year old student, Hannah Baker, who takes her own life and leaves behind audio recordings of 13 people who she says were part of the reason she killed herself. Producers of the show say they hope the series can help those who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide; however, the series is raising concerns amongst suicide prevention experts about the potential risks posed by the sensationalized treatment of youth suicide and the inability of adult role models to provide help for the student. Further, this series contains graphic depictions of bullying, rape, and drunk driving.

While many youth are resilient and capable of differentiating between a TV drama and real life, engaging in thoughtful conversations with them is vital. Doing so presents an opportunity to help them process the issues addressed, consider the consequences of choices, and reinforces the message that suicide is not a solution to problems. The National Association of School Psychologists does not recommend that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation watch this series as the story may lead impressionable viewers to romanticize the choices made by the characters and / or develop revenge fantasies. Additionally, the following recommendations and resources are available to district families:

1. Talk to your child and ask him or her if he or she has seen the series *13 Reasons Why*. While we don't recommend that students be encouraged to view the series, do tell your child that you want to watch it with him or her if your child is watching it and that you want to discuss their thoughts of it. A resource to assist in this discussion is: [http://www.save.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13RW-Talking-Points-Final\\_v5.pdf](http://www.save.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13RW-Talking-Points-Final_v5.pdf)
2. Ask your child how he or she would respond to a friend displaying warning signs of suicide. Talk to your child about how he or she would respond if a friend did express concern. Listen to your child without being judgmental.
3. If your child is displaying warning signs of suicide (such as but not limited to: making direct threats "I want to kill myself" or indirect threats "I need it to stop.", giving away prized possessions, having a preoccupation with death, exhibiting changes in behavior) be direct and ask your child if he or she is thinking of committing suicide.
4. Get help right away for any individual who is exhibiting concerns. Contact 911 if emergency help is needed. Individuals needing support can also contact 1-800-273-TALK or text "START" to 741741.
5. Know that supports are available at school. At TRJHS contact Mrs. Foley (Grade 7) or Mrs. Caliang (Grade 8) at 508-347-7381 to secure help for your child.

If you have any questions or concerns or need additional support, please follow up with supports available in your child's school. The district is happy to assist families in the discussion of important topics such as this.

Sincerely,

Erin Nosek, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools