

## Who Should We Ask?

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I am writing this proposal to ask you to make representation to the US Government Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in relation to improving support and guidance to young teenagers who are prone to depression and feelings of suicide by introducing new class room activities.

A survey by Youth Risk Behaviour (YRBS) in 2013 has published information relating to trends in prevalence of suicidal related behaviour in 9<sup>th</sup> through to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade students in public and private schools throughout the United States.

The (YRBS) survey is conducted by the Centres for Disease Control & Prevention that includes national, state, and local school based representative samples, the purpose of which, is to monitor priority risk health behaviours that contribute to leading causes of death, disability and social problems among youth in the USA.

The results published contained information from 1991-2013 and covered questions around seriously considering attempting suicide, making a plan about how they would attempt suicide and actual suicide attempts.

Although the rates of seriously considering attempting suicide have fallen from 29% in 1991 to 17% in 2013 the trend across all areas considered is on the rise and specifically since 2009. (up from 13.8% in 2009 to 17% in 2013)

I feel this is a real worrying statistic and these added to the fact that suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for aged 10-24 (2010 CDC WISQARS) and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for

1 college age youths aged 12-18 (2010 CDC WISQARS) gives me great cause for concern.

2 More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS,  
3 strokes and chronic lung disease COMBINED.

4 I feel the recent increased trend of youngsters seriously considering attempting suicide may be  
5 in direct relation to the worldwide recession of 2008 that has caused families to struggle  
6 financially, with some families being torn apart and teenagers may have had to move home  
7 with one parent. They may also then feel the pressure for them to perform better in schooling  
8 to ensure a happier home life with the parent.

9 There is also more and more pressure on youngsters to be part of the online social media  
10 community which can have some devastating effects if the relationships built up deteriorate  
11 and we then see the fallout from bullying and intimidation on line.

12 There is also an issue around the potential for employment when leaving school. The Youth  
13 Unemployment Rate in the United States increased to 13.70 percent in September of 2014  
14 from 13 percent in August of 2014 and the Youth Unemployment Rate in the United States  
15 averaged 12.32 Percent from 1955 until 2014, reaching an all-time high of 19.60 Percent in April  
16 of 2010.

17 If we take into consideration the high figures this has occurred in the middle of the largest  
18 financial crisis and adds more weight to the pressures on the shoulders of youngsters as they  
19 may also feel that there are no opportunities in the labour market when they leave schooling.

20 In terms of teaching I feel this should be introduced as part of the general curriculum. We

1 teach children how to add up and read poetry but we fail to teach the basics of life such as how  
2 to handle money and to deal with how they feel in a much more open way.

3 I would have special visits from people (or former pupils) who have suffered from depression  
4 at school age, come in and chat to the pupils about what they went through and why they were  
5 feeling this way. An open group much like you see at Alcoholic Anonymous meetings where  
6 everything is open and students can talk openly about these feelings.

7 I would also like to suggest that parents come into the school and also take part in these  
8 discussions. They can show and tell the class that they have negative feelings and happy times  
9 and that being able to balance these is part of your normal day to day existence and everyone  
10 has these feelings every day. The pupil is not alone in having these feelings.

11 We deal with a lot of facts in schooling but very little feeling and I feel this needs to change.

12 I feel these initiatives fit in perfectly with your objective of Community Support for Families and  
13 Youth. Your NAMI basics package and the NAMI Family to Family initiatives are all very credible  
14 and worthwhile but I feel we need to get to the problems at a much earlier age and I feel that  
15 bringing your expertise into schools will allow you to continue your good work in this area.

16 Your team can arrange and plan these specific meetings on a weekly basis and raise the  
17 awareness of the organisation and the good it does in the community, along with actually  
18 making a real difference to individuals that interact in the discussions.

19 I believe NAMI can help in these matters and will outline where I feel you can help make  
20 difference in the future mental health welfare of these youngsters.

1 Your website quotes

2 "Suicide is one of the greatest tragedies imaginable for a victim and their loved ones. Each year  
3 suicide claims approximately 30,000 lives in America which makes it responsible for slightly  
4 more than 1 percent of deaths in the United States. Suicidal thoughts and behaviors are a  
5 psychiatric emergency requiring immediate intervention to prevent this disastrous event. It is  
6 the most common psychiatric emergency with close to 1 million Americans receiving treatment  
7 for suicidal thoughts, behaviors or attempts on a yearly basis."

8 My proposal is to make sure we get clear, easy to read literature out into all schools across the  
9 United States that outline the basics of depression and how these negative feelings can be  
10 managed. I do not feel that society does enough at the school age to teach youngsters about  
11 feelings and how they are normal and an everyday part of you being a normal human being. We  
12 can all feel fear, rejection, loss and happiness and part of our own mental wellbeing is being  
13 able to adjust and cope with these feelings day to day.

14 The literature should include local contact details for professionals in the industry and give the  
15 students information around what kind of pastoral care is available within the school to assist  
16 them in taking matters forward.

17 Part of an individual's problem stem from the fact that they do not want to talk about their  
18 feelings or anxieties to someone they know and it is really important that they are aware that  
19 there is a confidential process they can use to help them.

20 I believe suicide is a public health issue and I feel that the Department of Health & Human

1 Services is the office best placed to take these matters forward rather than the Department of  
2 Education. Although my proposals revolve around introducing new lessons into the curriculum I  
3 feel we need the public health issues to be addressed and highlighted to the Government to  
4 make them aware of what needs to be done. We can then put pressure on for these changes to  
5 be made

6 Will you put my proposals to the Government and along with your support I feel we can start to  
7 make a big difference in helping youngsters cope much better with their negative feelings and  
8 therefore reduce the inclination of suicidal thoughts and the terrible tragedies that follow.

## Work Sample Evaluation

**Subject Area:** U.S. Government

**Task Title:** Whom Should We Ask?

**Student Work Sample Title:** Who Should We Ask?

The document was scored using the *CCR Task Bank Rubric*. The final scores are indicated in the following chart.

Scoring Criteria	Insufficient Evidence	Developing	Progressing	Accomplished	Exceeds
Research and Investigation		X			
Ideas and Content			X		
Reading and Analysis		X			
Communication		X			
Organization			X		
Accuracy		X			

**Annotations:** The following evidence from the work sample and the reviewer’s comments support the scores above. Page and line numbers refer to the original work sample.

Scoring Criteria	Page #	Line #	Commentary about the work sample
<b>Research and Investigation:</b> <i>Locating resources independently and/or identifying information within provided texts</i>	1	16-18	The work sample cites statistics to reinforce the issue; refers to a more recent increase in consideration of suicide by young adults.
	1	19-20	The work sample provides more evidence that suicide among youth is a significant cause of death among young people.
	All		The lack of adequate citations to references makes it difficult to confirm any of the information provided in the paper.
	2	12-13	Without proper citation, the statistics quoted in the work sample give the reader little confidence in their accuracy.
<b>Ideas and Content:</b> <i>Presenting a thesis and understanding concepts</i>	1	1-5	The work sample makes the purpose of the appeal clear and immediately identifies the branch of government (bureaucratic agency) that is most appropriate to approach.
	3	1-5, 7	The student offers relevant suggestions to interest groups.
	All		The work sample never addresses the powers of the agency or of the other branches of government to justify them as a target of appeal.
<b>Reading and Analysis:</b> <i>Evaluating sources and selecting evidence to support the central idea</i>	3	12-20	The paper suggests an understanding of the interest group’s program and mission. It also explains why the student’s specific suggestions would fit well within the interest group’s purview.
	4-5	20-2	The student justifies the appeal to the Department of HHS rather than the Department of Education.
	All		Again, the sample needs to include at least some reference to other branches.
<b>Communication:</b> <i>Using subject-appropriate language and considering audience</i>	2	2-3	The student effectively uses outside information that appeals to the audience in order to make a compelling argument about why this issue is important.
	3	11	This is a strong statement that we need to shift our schools’ focus from facts to students’ feelings.
	3	12, 16, 19	The student speaks to the interest group (NAMI) and explains how the group can put the suggestions into action.
	4	20	The work sample discusses suicide in terms of a “public health issue.”
<b>Organization:</b> <i>Structuring main ideas and supporting information</i>	2	4-6	The student offers a suggestion for a cause in the increase of those who are “seriously considering suicide” that coincides with earlier statistical trends.
	2	9-11	The work sample submits another cause for the increase in the number of those who consider suicide (online social media).
	2	12	The sample submits yet another possible cause for an increase in suicide consideration (unemployment), but does not adequately explain the connection.
			Overall, the paper is broken up into short segments (almost as though the paper was written for a bullet-point presentation).

Scoring Criteria	Page #	Line #	Commentary about the work sample
<b>Accuracy:</b> <i>Attending to detail,            grammar, spelling,            conventions, citations,            and formatting</i>	3	8-10	This is one example of many run-on sentences in the paper.
	4	1	The author needs to use appropriate punctuation, format, and attribution for the quote on lines 2-7.
	5	6-8	This final sentence needs to be broken into multiple sentences. The question should have a question mark.
	All		The work sample uses only 2 sources (one of which comes from NAMI in the form of a quote on page 4) without a Works Cited page (only incomplete in-text citations).