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### PRELIMINARY ALERT

We are receiving numerous calls with questions and concerns regarding the trending Netflix series “13 Reasons Why”, specifically regarding its use as a suicide prevention educational resource. The producers of the series have stated that they wanted the show to assist those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. The series does highlight the consequences of youth who are bystanders to such incidents and do not report them to an adult, and attempts to address a myriad of other topics such as rape, sex shaming, bullying and drunk driving.

Our primary concern regarding the use of this series as an educational resource is around the potential impact on youth who are vulnerable, have a history of trauma, are victims of related content, or are currently struggling with suicidal ideation. The overall content is very heavy (including the graphic depiction of a suicide death) and it is quite likely many of you are already seeing the impact of these complex traumatic triggers in your school community. While we are not aware of a single case where a student has said exposure to this documentary has lowered their risk, we do know of multiple cases (coast to coast) where it has increased their risk. In some communities, we are also already seeing imitator behaviour involving increased levels of suicidal ideation and individuals making their own version of “justification tapes”.

We are engaged in this discussion not to interfere with the professional autonomy of our educators, but to ensure the social, emotional and mental well-being of all staff and students. With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations to schools where this series is being considered for use in the classroom:

- District staff and school administrators should work with counselling staff to be available as consultants to any teacher considering portioned uses of the series.
- School administrators should feel confident that any professional inside their school considering the use of this medium is skilled to do so and that the school has adequate counselling contingencies to address any symptom development generated from the series.
- Any episode or clips depicting method used to complete suicide should not be shown in the school setting.
- District or school staff may want to issue a communication to parents to inform them about the series and strategies for discussing the content with their children (see “guidance for families” section of the NASP article below).
- District or school staff may want to share the tips in the “guidance to educators” section of the NASP article below with those staff members that play a key role in supporting vulnerable students.

The following recent professional articles provide guidance for educators and parents:

- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), [www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators](http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators)
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, [www.save.org/blog/tips-watching-new-netflix-series-13-reasons/](http://www.save.org/blog/tips-watching-new-netflix-series-13-reasons/)
- Common Sense Media, [www.commonsensemedia.org/tv-reviews/13-reasons-why](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/tv-reviews/13-reasons-why)

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Sherri Mohoruk at [Sherri.Mohoruk@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Sherri.Mohoruk@gov.bc.ca) or (604) 868-3949.

Sincerely,

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