

October 4, 2021

Dear 7th Grade Parents and Guardians:

Thoreau Middle School is committed to fostering a caring culture in which all students can learn and thrive. Our school and division focus on how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions as these benefit our students in school and in life. The adolescent years can be difficult to navigate as youth experience a wide range of emotions. It can be easy to confuse normal adolescent sadness or frustration with depression. Depression, among the most common forms of mental illnesses, appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Though depression is a leading risk factor for self-injury and suicide, it is **treatable**.

To proactively address this issue, Thoreau Middle School's clinical team will be conducting a wellness screening on **Tuesday, November 9th, and Wednesday, November 10th, to our 7th grade students**. This free, voluntary, and confidential screening is in place to help students identify symptoms consistent with depression as well as when to seek adult support. This screening does not provide a diagnosis, but rather encourages help-seeking behaviors in students concerned about themselves or a friend.

The screening will take place in all 7th grade Health & Physical Education classes. Students will be presented with a short informational video titled "*Time to ACT*," which is an acronym for Acknowledge, Care, Tell and the process we want all students to remember when concerned about themselves or a friend. Students will then take a brief paper-pencil survey that provides general feedback to all participants and more specific feedback for those who may require extra support and services. Following the video and screening, a private interview with a member of our Student Services team will be conducted for any student who appears to have symptoms consistent with depression. We will contact parents in these situations where an individual meeting takes place.

To ensure this is a meaningful learning opportunity for our students, we must closely partner with our parent community. To that end, I would like to share how to access an informational parent portal which is supported and maintained by a nationally recognized organization, MindWise Innovations. This portal will not only allow you an opportunity to review the materials and topics we will cover in our screening but will also connect you with resources and educational materials related to adolescent mental health issues.

Parent Login Information:

<https://sossignsof suicide.org/parent>

Username: thoreau-par

Password: thoreauSOS

Translated Parent Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5e27-ocGBHqSSvbIIL9-1lbr8gutAe5k>

Parents may opt their child out of participating in the wellness screening. If you wish to opt your child out of participating, please complete the form on the reverse of this letter and return it to me or to your child's counselor by Monday, November 1st.

If you have any questions about the screening, please feel free to contact me or your child's counselor. In addition, please visit the Student Services page on the Thoreau website for resources related to mental wellness.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Aguilar
Director of Student Services
Thoreau Middle School



2021-2022 PARENT/GUARDIAN OPT-OUT FORM FOR GRADE 7th GRADE WELLNESS SCREENING

If you wish to opt your child out of participating in the wellness screening please complete this form and return it to your child's counselor or Rebecca Aguilar, Director of Student Services, by **Monday, November 1, 2021**.

I, _____, would like to opt my child _____
(Parent or Guardian) (7th Grade Student Name- PLEASE PRINT)

out of participating in the wellness screening at Thoreau Middle School.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

THIS FORM MAY BE RETURNED BY EMAIL AT rjaguilar1@fcps.edu, DELIVERED BY STUDENT, OR MAILED TO:

Rebecca Aguilar
Director of Student Services
Thoreau Middle School
2505 Cedar Lane
Vienna, Virginia 22180