

New form submission

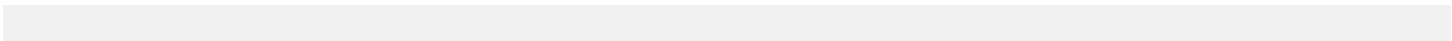
YSPTF Testimony Form

Submitted on 10 October 2018, via IP 216.21.167.45 by Anonymous

NOTE: All testimony submitted is subject to public disclosure under the Kansas Open Records Act and will become a part of the official record of the Task Force.

Full Name	Steff Hedenkamp
Organization	#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign
Email Address	steff@overflowstory.com
Phone Number	816-506-4630
Website URL	http://zeroreasonswhy.org
Meeting at which you wish to testify:	Oct. 18, Olathe
What hurdles have you experienced and/or lessons learned through your efforts?	Attempted teen suicides have increased and teen death by suicide has nearly doubled in Johnson County in the first six months of 2018. There are multivariate hurdles to overcome, and by mobilizing necessary resources, disseminating information, generating support, and fostering cooperation across public and private sectors in the community, we can influence the conversation and destigmatize the issue. In June, the superintendents in Johnson County initiated a deeper dialogue and identified collaboration opportunities. Their intention is to mobilize the community around this preventable epidemic, and they envision working to help students to see the future and remove any barriers that stand in the way.
What efforts have proven to be successful in your purpose to address youth suicide?	In September, the six school districts in Johnson County, Kansas joined together to launch the #ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign to prevent teen suicide. Focused on telling peer-to-peer stories and empowering community members to take action toward change, the campaign is organizing, facilitating, and supporting students, parents, educators, and practitioners, as well as other stakeholders to implement action plans, programs, events, and outreach efforts - as there are zero reasons why we cannot come together to make a difference on this community issue. Two key efforts of the campaign involve a story campaign and community mobilization team. The #ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign will take place during the 2018-2019 academic year, and it is supported by the Johnson County school districts of Blue Valley, De Soto, Gardner Edgerton, Olathe, Shawnee Mission, and Spring Hill. The campaign is working closely with influential leaders representing mental health providers, parents, the faith community, and the local business community to multiply and amplify the impact of this work. Our collective effort will allow us to strengthen the system of care and support - to help establish a Standard Practice of Care at the community level - for children in Johnson County.

Recommendations or suggestions for the task force to consider:	It is recommended that the task force work collaboratively with the #ZeroReasonsWhy campaign to help the Johnson County community change this narrative and reverse the increase in teen suicide. This campaign can be a model for other regions of the state and beyond. There are zero reasons why we can't make a difference and change this conversation for the social well-being of our children. It is suggested the task force work to share the work of this campaign model, that involves student ambassadors, parent advocates, educator representatives, and counselor champions who are leading #ZeroReasonsWhy campaign activities, including student-led initiatives, rallies, and meet ups; cross district programs; social media efforts; response and street teams; parent-to-parent support; mental health expert collaboration; as well as billboards, posters, banners, yard signs, and more.
Upload Testimony	
Captcha	False



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, November 29, 2018



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Contact Steff Hedenkamp, Public Affairs Director, Overflow
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#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign Forms Teen Council to Voice Teen Perceptions to City, County, and State Civic Leaders

(JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS) November 27, 2018 – The **#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign** formed the Johnson County Teen Council to address teen suicide prevention strategies in an effort to strengthen the voices of teens and share their unique insights. In collaboration with the members of the countywide Superintendents’ Mental Health Convening, SpeakUp Foundation, and Tom Karlin Foundation, teenagers from each of the six Johnson County school districts are tackling strategy, initiatives, and tactics to improve social and emotional well-being for teens.

“It has become increasingly clear since we launched the **#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign** in September we need to listen to the teens in order to disrupt this preventable epidemic,” said Spring Hill Superintendent Dr. Wayne Burke. “The Teen Council is the cornerstone of the **#ZeroReasonsWhy** story campaign and community mobilization effort to prevent teen suicide.”

Consisting of nine students from the six Johnson County school districts, the Teen Council met for its inaugural meeting on November 19 and plans to meet monthly through the end of the campaign in May 2019. Out of the first meeting, three pillars and objectives were identified and formed by the Teen Council to address teen suicide during the campaign.

1. **Remove the Stigma:** Eliminate the stigma associated with suicide and open the dialogue for change.
2. **Build Community Support:** Bring the community closer to spur unconditional support without judgment.
3. **Commit to Education:** Improve and implement mental health (and suicide prevention) education consistently and earlier in school.

Acting as an Executive Team, the Teen Council is directing the **#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign** team in leading student, parent, educator and practitioner initiatives and tactics related to the three objectives above. Council members will share advice and address city, county, and state civic leaders as representatives of the greater teen population.

“To be effective, the **#ZeroReasonsWhy** campaign is relying on the collaboration across leaders in health, government and education, and we are excited for the leadership of the Teen Council,” said Shawnee Mission Superintendent Mike Fulton. “They really are making the difference.”

(more)

#ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign Forms Johnson County Teen Council



“I’m **Blake Burns**, a senior at Gardner Edgerton High School. Suicide is a major epidemic in our society. I believe serving on the Teen Council will be a huge step to ending suicide. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy we should lose another life to suicide.”

“My name is **Courtney Costain**, and I am a junior at Spring Hill High School. For me, serving on this Teen Council is important because I’ve seen the isolation and hurt caused by mental illness. I’ve witnessed the lack of education on mental health because of a stigma. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy teens should have to face mental illness uneducated and alone.”



“My name is **Weston Curnow**. I am a junior at Olathe West High School. At school I am involved with our Student Council and serve as Vice President. I also am heavily involved with Choir and Theatre at my high school. Outside school I Co-Chair the City of Olathe’s Olathe Teen Council and serve as a member of the Olathe Parks and Recreation Foundation Board. I chose to serve on the Teen Council because improving my community is very important to me. Anyway I can improve the lives around me I try to get involved with. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy anyone should ever feel so isolated from their community that they see suicide as their only option.”

“My name is **Taylor Fergola**, and I am a senior at Gardner Edgerton High School. I have many loved ones and kids in my school who come to me wanting me to help all the time. It frustrates me thinking there is not much I could do at the moment. That’s why I am more than grateful for this campaign and that me and everyone on it are going to try and help these cries with one smile at a time.”



“My name is **Abby Hoepner**, and I’m a senior at Mill Valley High School. It’s important to me we remove the stigma surrounding the discussion of suicide, which prevents teens from reaching out for help. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy we can’t talk about this.”

“My name is **Mary Beth Karlin**, and I am a senior at Shawnee Mission West High School. My brother Tom Karlin took his life on Nov. 5, 2011 after being molested most of his life, which resulted in depression. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy suicide should even be an option for teens, kids, and even adults. We need to educate everyone on how to get help and how to cope with depression, so we can stop these suicides.”



(more)

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“My name is **Drew Langston**, and I am a senior at Olathe East High School. Suicide is a matter that should not be taken lightly nor be forbidden to discuss. As students it is our job to take care of one another as well as ourselves. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy someone should feel alone in their community.”

“My name is **Bella Price**, and I am a senior at Spring Hill High School. In 2015 one of my best friends took his life right before our freshman year. Almost a year later, another student from my class took his life. Suicide and mental health is a problem at every high school and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. This Teen Council is the beginning steps to finding a solution because there are #ZeroReasonsWhy we shouldn't talk about mental health.”



“I'm **Rory Swenson**, and I am currently a junior at Blue Valley North High School. My family has a deep connection to mental health issues, and since a young age I have known this would be an issue I would work toward addressing. Above all else I want to unite the community against the stigma surrounding suicide, and bring the issue into the light. There are #ZeroReasonsWhy anyone should feel as though they have no one left to turn to or to ask for help.”

BACKGROUND

[#ZeroReasonsWhy](#) is a county wide teen suicide prevention campaign. Sparked by a Superintendent-led Mental Health Convening Group to address the social and emotional well-being of students, #ZeroReasonsWhy is a story campaign and community mobilization effort that seeks to mobilize student, parent, educator and practitioner stories around a community standard of care and prevention. Focused on empowering community members to take action toward change, the campaign is organizing, facilitating, and supporting students, parents, educators, and practitioners in implementing action plans, programs, events, and collaborative outreach efforts. The community in Johnson County is coming together to remove the reasons why suicide would be an option for any teen. The following Superintendent leadership represents the six school districts of Johnson County Kansas:

1. **Todd White**, Blue Valley Schools, Superintendent
2. **Frank Harwood**, USD 232 – De Soto, Superintendent
3. **Pam Stranathan**, Gardner Edgerton School District, Superintendent
4. **John Allison**, Olathe Public Schools, Superintendent
5. **Mike Fulton**, Shawnee Mission School District, Superintendent
6. **Kenny Southwick**, Shawnee Mission School District, Deputy Superintendent
7. **Dr. Wayne Burke**, Spring Hill School District, Superintendent

