**After accidents, suicide is the #1 cause of death among youth and teens according to the latest Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2015) statistics.** Tragically, adolescent suicides have increased dramatically in the United States since 2007. Untreated mental illness lies at the root of many barriers to adolescent success and is an underlying cause of suicide. The early detection and treatment of mental illness saves young lives.

**LifeAct’s mission is to prevent teen suicide by educating youth to recognize depression and the warning signs of suicide and to access help for themselves and/or their peers*.*** LifeAct, formerly known as the Suicide Prevention Education Alliance (SPEA), was founded in 1992 in Cleveland, Ohio by Lyman H. (Tim) Treadway who lost his son to suicide. In 2014, SPEA became "LifeAct" to convey the organization's pro-active, positive approach to saving young lives through its commitment to engage, educate, and empower students. Annually, LifeAct now reaches over 50,000 Northeast Ohioans through its school programs, community events, social messaging and/or online outreach.

# Program Overview

LifeAct’s **evidence-based** high school program, “Recognizing Teen Depression and Preventing Suicide” (RTDPS), teaches teens to identify the warning signs of suicide in themselves and their peers. Students who request additional information or support from a **LifeAct instructor** during or immediately after the program are immediately connected to either school-based or community professional mental health resources for intervention or treatment. An important goal of the program is to help at-risk students seek professional help. In addition to in-person referral to school-based resources, students are provided with 24/7 crisis tools to connect to help after program delivery in the form of help cards, LifeAct pens, and the LifeAct web site with crisis and text chat.

LifeAct’s community network partners include:

* **FrontLine Service** for 24/7 immediate intervention/referral
* **University Hospitals, Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital** for treatment/referral

Over 200,000 high school students, Grades 9-12, have participated in the program since 2000. Responding to data showing that increasingly younger children are contemplating suicide, LifeAct launched a new middle school program -- UROK™ -- in 2014 that complements the high school program, with age-appropriate content. To date, UROK™ has been delivered to over 17,000 Northeast Ohio Grades 6-8 students.

**Last school year (2016-2017**):

* **24,659 students** participated in an RTDPS or UROK™ program
* **189 schools** from 9 counties in Northeast Ohio received the program
* **2,130 students (8.6% referral rate)** asked a LifeAct instructor for additional information or help

It is projected in the 2017-2018 school year, **LifeAct programs will reach 28,500 students in 12 Northeast Ohio counties.** The population of students served by LifeAct programming include teens, Grades 6-12, from public and private schools in urban, suburban and rural school districts.

The curricula for both school programs are aligned with the recommendations of the 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention Report by the US Surgeon General and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Qualified, trained instructors visit school classrooms to deliver the 2-day, 90-minute programs. Two sessions allow for greater absorption of RTDPS’s or UROK’s lifesaving messages and give students 2 opportunities to interact with a LifeAct instructor. Both programs use compelling real-life scenarios, role-play, skits, small group activities, technology-driven presentations, and interactive Q & A to engage youth in real-time dialogue while learning about suicide and strategies for prevention. **Students learn the signs of depression, which is a major risk factor for suicide. They also learn that depression is treatable, how to overcome the stigma of a mental health issue and to ask for help for themselves or others from a caring adult.**

**LifeAct offers its programs without charge to maximize its reach throughout Northeast Ohio.** LifeAct receives minimal government funding (<1%), therefore, annual support from individuals, corporations, foundations and special events is critical to ensure that these students receive LifeAct’s lifesaving programs.

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**Counties Implemented: Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Franklin, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Trumbull and Tuscarawas**