Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for youth, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression—which is treatable—is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, your student’s school is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program has proven to be successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program listed by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. In a randomized control study, the SOS high school program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

* To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
* To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
* To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend
* To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns
* To help students know whom in the school they can turn to for help, if they need it

The Potomac Shores School Student Services Department will be running the SOS Program for the 7th grade students during their Health and Physical Education class.

Following the video, the students will participate in a follow-up discussion and complete the response cards, indicating whether or not they need to talk to someone about themselves or a friend. Homeroom teachers, school social worker, school psychologist and counselors will be facilitating the process and providing support to students who may need it. The Student Services Department will be reviewing the response cards to identify any students who might need intervention. The students will be putting their names on the response cards in order to accurately identify any students who need assistance.

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to review the materials, please contact Ms. Elliot at elliotja@pwcs.edu.

If you do **NOT** wish your child participating in SOS program in school, please complete the bottom of this form and return it to Potomac Shores Middle School to the attention of the Counseling Department. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child **has permission** to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to participate in the *SOS Program*.

Parent signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Please Note: This form only needs to be returned if you DO NOT wish for your child to participate.**