



DIocese OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

128 Cherry Lane, Hicksville, New York 11801



Office of the
Superintendent

May 1, 2017

Dear Catholic School Families:

As we celebrate the Easter season and the start of Spring, I wish to share my prayers for you and your family. I contact you today with a sensitive topic, but one that deserves immediate attention.

You may already be aware of a new *Netflix* series that has gone viral with youth, especially among middle and high school-aged children. The series is titled, *13 Reasons Why*, and it is based on a 2007 novel by Jay Asher. Sadly, the episodes discuss the story of a 16 year old girl, Hannah Baker, who commits suicide after being bullied, abused online, and sexually assaulted. Hannah leaves behind 13 audio tapes, each addressed to a different person who she asserts played a role in her decision to take her life, either by things they did to her, or by things they could have done to help.

13 Reasons Why is a raw, lifelike depiction of a teen's experience, and that is validating for other children. The series depicts the pressures teens face, including the tension between wanting to stand out and wanting to fit in. It is extremely graphic in its portrayal of the incidents that happen, including the sexual assault and Hannah's suicide. The series was released by *Netflix* on March 31, 2017 and millions of teens have watched it. During breaks and weekends, children may attempt to binge-watch all 13 episodes of the series. As you can imagine, there are numerous concerns about the series.

If you think your child or a friend of your child is struggling with suicidal thoughts, please ask for help and call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline / JED Foundation** at 1-800-273-8255 (available 24 hours, 7 days per week). You can also text "START" to 741-741.

Please find resources below to help you understand the series and discuss with your child(ren). I strongly suggest you are proactive if you have a child that is accessing *Netflix* at any time.

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

13 Reasons Why: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly – YouTube video by Roy Petitfils

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngD3PtPt3ac>

In this video Roy Petitfils, LPC a licensed counselor specializing in working with adolescents discusses 1) Why *13 Reasons* is so appealing to teens 2) Concerns about the content 3) How adults can use this as an opportunity to create meaningful dialogue about the serious issues presented in the show.

JED Foundation

13 Reasons Why: Tips for Viewing and Discussing New Netflix Series:

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-why-talking-points/>

Netflix 13 Reasons Why - What Viewers Should Consider:

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>

You will most likely hear more about the series in the coming weeks and months, but I thought it was important to send you some helpful resources as soon as possible.

In the event you have questions specific to your child/children, please contact your principal.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathleen Walsh
Superintendent of schools
Diocese of Rockville Centre