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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Taking a proactive step, the Burlington County Institute of Technology School District would like to call your attention to the new Netflix original series entitled *13 Reasons Why*. The series is popular among teenagers in our schools and across the United States. The miniseries is based on the 2007 John Asher novel of the same name. The series tells the story of seventeen-year-old Hannah Baker, who takes her own life, and leaves behind audio recordings to people who she believed were part of her decision to commit suicide. The show has generated a lot of discussion in social media and among mental health experts. In keeping with our mission to keep the students of the Burlington County Institute of Technology School District safe and secure, parents informed and parents and their children positioned to enhance the essential conversation about teens, suicide, and mental health issues at home, we would like to offer the following suggestions:

- Take the time to watch the series yourself in order to become aware of the issues in the show.
- If your teenager is watching it, have a conversation about the content, and possibly watch it together. Please see some of the resources below to aid in the discussion.
- Please contact a mental health professional or your school's counseling department about any child, including your own, about whom you may have concerns.

Exposure to real or dramatized stories such as the series *13 Reasons Why* can lead to misconceptions among our youth about suicide and increase risk. While many young people know the difference between a television drama and real life, teens talking with adults about this subject is very important. This is particularly important given that the series is scheduled to run a second year. Adults can help share the message that **suicide is not a solution to problems and help is available for those who need it**.

According to Suicide Awareness Voice of Education (www.save.org), youth warning signs include:

- Talking about or making plans for suicide
- Expressing hopelessness about the future
- Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress
- Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above, such as:
 - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
 - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)



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- Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
 - Recent increased agitation or irritability

Other resources include:

- 2nd Floor Youth Help Line 1-888-222-2228
- Burlington County Crisis Center (609) 835-6180
- the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (or text "START" to 741741)
- New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention, <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/prevention>
- 13 Reasons Why: Talking Points for Conversations with Youth
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/positive-parenting-teens-8-tips-from-psychology-aymee-coget-phd>
- <http://www.positive-parenting-ally.com/positive-parenting.html>
- <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

Your student's school counselors, teachers, support staff, and administrators are firmly committed to working to produce a safe and supportive environment for all students. Thank you for partnering with the staff of the Burlington County Institute of Technology School District in our collective mission to develop physically and emotionally healthy students.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph Venuto
Principal