

Parents, if you know of young people who are reading or viewing the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, please view a very important webinar from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Youth Ministry Office. It can be found at [www.archindyym.com/13reasons](http://www.archindyym.com/13reasons). The webinar also provides information on teen suicide prevention.

Despite its TV-Mature rating, the Netflix original series has become popular among middle school and high school-age students. Based on a young adult novel released a decade ago, the mini-series depicts high school student Hannah Baker and the ramifications of her suicide. She leaves behind 13 tape recorded messages detailing why she took her own life and who was “responsible.” Her former classmates are left to piece together Hannah’s final weeks.

Suicide prevention groups, youth leaders and educators have expressed concern that young people watching the show might see suicide presented as a viable or romanticized option. The show’s content is extremely graphic, with disturbing scenes in each episode.

Experts have pointed out the following shortcomings in the series:

- There is no mention of behavioral health or treatment options
- The notion of suicide is glamorized
- There are several scenes depicting serious trauma, in which the teens do not seek help or resources - including rape, bullying, alcoholism and suicide
- The graphic portrayal of Hannah’s actual suicide was unnecessary and potentially harmful to young people facing challenges

Mary Rezac writes in an article for Catholic News Agency:

“Suicide prevention groups and youth leaders have raised concerns because the show is particularly popular among a teenage audience, and teenagers are a vulnerable population.

“Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 10 and 24, according to the CDC. Studies show that publicized suicides may also trigger a ripple effect of additional suicides within communities.

“The show has also faced backlash from mental health experts, who say it fails to follow several of the ‘Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide,’ a list of guidelines for media outlets developed by suicide prevention experts and journalists. Experts advise against sensational headlines or describing a suicide in graphic detail, which studies have shown can lead to suicide contagion, or ‘copycat’ suicides.

“Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, a U.S. non-profit suicide prevention group, has also said that the show may do ‘more harm than good.’

“Life Teen, an international youth ministry program, released a video and a written message to young people, warning them of possible triggers in the show and of the inadequate ways it addresses suicide and mental health.”