

Subject: Harmful Social Media Game Targeting Youth

Dear JHES Families,

We would like to make you aware of a social media game called “The Momo Challenge,” which has recently been discussed across a number of media outlets. The game reportedly targets children and teenagers across a variety of social media platforms. According to these reports, the game shares a disturbing image of a character and encourages the user to participate in challenges that can potentially be dangerous to themselves and others, including challenges related to suicide.

In response to similar social media concerns in the past, the University of Maryland Center for School Mental Health provided guidelines for parents and guardians which are adapted below:

- If you know someone is engaging in the Momo Challenge, it is important to connect them with mental health professionals immediately.
- Monitor your child’s use of electronic devices. Discuss the websites, links and social media apps they are using. Caregivers can monitor media use by looking through browsers and search histories.
- Know the warning signs of psychological distress. Observable signs include changes in behavior (e.g. outbursts or being withdrawn) or physical health (e.g. weight loss or gain; loss of appetite), hopelessness, sadness, boredom and depression. If you see signs of distress, ask if they are considering suicide. Asking about suicide does not increase risk of suicide.
- Have discussions with your child about distress. When having conversations with children, listen to their thoughts, remain calm and be nonjudgmental. Avoid statements like “you should get over it.” Talk to community or school mental health professionals if you are concerned about someone’s health or safety.
- Call for help. If someone makes an immediate threat to hurt or kill themselves, call 911. If a person shows warning signs of distress, but does not make an immediate threat, you can encourage him/her to:
 - Call Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center: 410-531-6677
 - Call Maryland Suicide Hotline: 1-800-422-0009
 - Call National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
 - Text Crisis Text Line at 741741

If you have concerns about the mental or emotional well-being of your child, seek help from a community-based mental health provider or contact the school counselor, school psychologist or other student services staff at your child’s school. Some additional resources are listed below:

- Talking to Kids When They Need Help <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/help-kids.aspx>
- Parent Guides from Connect Safely <https://www.connectsafely.org/parentguides/>
- Prevention of Cyberbullying <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention>

Thank you once again for partnering with us to ensure the mental and emotional well-being of all our students.

Respectfully,
Maisha Strong
Principal

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