

# NATURAL HELPERS

## *of South Dakota*

Within every school, an informal “helping network” already exists. Students experiencing problems naturally seek out other students – and also adults – whom they trust. Natural Helpers uses this helping network to disseminate as much accurate information as possible to all students. It provides training to students and adults who are already serving as helpers, giving them skills to help others more effectively.

The program uses an anonymous school-wide survey to identify a cross-section of students and school adults. These students and staff will learn skills to become a better Natural Helper, including:

- Qualities & expectations
- Importance of self-care
- Listening & communication
- Knowing when friends need help
- Situations that require professional help
- Expressing care & concern
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Available Resources

Following the training, adult advisors monitor the Natural Helpers and provide additional training and support as needed. The curriculum provides a strong message on referrals and resources related to substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention.

The program has four basic goals to help young people develop the capability to:

- Prevent some of the problems experienced during adolescence
- Intervene effectively with friends experiencing problems
- Choose positive ways of taking care of themselves
- Improve their school and community

Students play a variety of roles as Natural Helpers. Some roles include:

- Continuing to help their friends with concerns
- Lending a sympathetic ear to those in need of a friend
- Recognizing when people have serious problems – like depression, substance use – and referring them to trained helping resources
- Working with members of their helping team to discuss issues and specific problems
- Providing accurate information
- Becoming more involved with their school and community



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