

**Student Suicide Cases Doubled and are at their Highest in 10 Years**  
**The Samaritans Launched “Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course”**  
**to Raise Awareness and Call for Students’ Enrollment to Protect Everyone in Need**

[17th May, 2025] In light of the alarming rise in student suicide cases, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has supported The Samaritans in launching the "HKJC Embrace Life Series 2.0: Navigating A Positive Life" Programme to provide comprehensive suicide prevention and crisis intervention services to all school stakeholders. The “Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course” was also launched for students, teachers, and the public to learn about the knowledge and skills of suicide prevention. Today, a kick-off ceremony for the Course was held in Cyberport.

The rise in student suicide cases has aroused great public concern. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention reported that since 2013, the suicide rate of those between 10 and 19 years old had surged 2.8 times in 10 years. In 2023, 32 cases involving school-aged students were recorded. From August to October of 2023, the media reported 22 cases of suicide among those below 18 or in post-secondary education. A recent report by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups found that nearly 30 per cent of Hong Kong secondary school students have thought about harming or killing themselves. In the past week, an 11-year-old girl died by suicide with a suspected reason of emotional distress.

Therefore, to equip students with knowledge and skills of suicide prevention, The Samaritans, in collaboration with Professor Paul Wong from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Hong Kong, has designed and launched an Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course. The five modules of the Course aim at training students to identify suicidal ideations through verbal and behavioural cues. Students are provided with the necessary skills to support their suicidal peers and information about relevant community support they can seek help from. It is hoped to initiate early intervention at the peer level to support students’ mental well-being.

Dr. the Honourable LAM Ching-choi, non-official member of the HKSAR Executive Council and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Mental Health, was invited to officiate the kick-off ceremony of the Course. From his video, he called for the community to actively seek help for mental health issues. Several other high-profile guests also attended the

ceremony to support the programme, including Dr the Honourable Tik Chi-yuen, Legislative Councilor; Professor Paul Wong from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Hong Kong; representative from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust; Mr. On Chan, singer; and Mr. Yapp Hung Fai, captain of the Hong Kong national football team. They encouraged students to stay open-minded on mental health issues and to learn about suicide prevention to become gatekeepers.

Mr. Gabriel Liu, Co-chairman of The Samaritans, stressed the urgent need to tackle the worsening mental state of people, "We must act to provide specific support, especially to students. The Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course can equip students with skills to support their peers. It helps people around them to realize that they are not alone in the face of difficulties."

Professor Paul Wong W. C. further provided his insights, "The rising trend of suicide cases among teenagers weighs heavily on society. This Course aims to equip more individuals with the skills to identify emotionally distressed teenagers and enable early intervention and support. In response to the concerns and needs when teenagers are seeking help, the Course design facilitates peer understanding, care, and communication, thereby encouraging companionship and access to relevant support. Suicide prevention also relies on existing services and policies that help cultivate a more compassionate and youth-friendly environment. The University of Hong Kong, in partnership with Samaritans, is committed to researching and developing this Course to prove its effectiveness in suicide prevention among teenagers.

Mr. On Chan and Mr. Yapp Hung Fai prompted all sectors of society to pay attention to issues related to mental well-being. They wish the public could have frank discourse around mental health and seek professional help when needed, to achieve suicide prevention. Sean Wong, who played in the film "Time Still Turns the Pages", expressed his honour to join the filming of this Course. He gained valuable insights into the skills to care for and support his friends and family members. Through his performance, he hoped the audience would be encouraged to take up the roles of gatekeepers.

### **About The Samaritans**

The Samaritans is a non-profit and non-religious organization that has been working in Hong Kong for over half a century. Emotional support is provided to those who are in distress or suicidal, regardless of their age, creed, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

The 24-hour multilingual hotline service is operated by unpaid, trained volunteers. Since the establishment in 1974, The Samaritans have received more than 563,200 phone calls from callers ranging in age from 8 to 80.

### **About the "Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course"**

The "Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training Course" is tailored for Hong Kong students to improve their knowledge and skills in suicide prevention. Through different dramas and interactive elements, the Course guides students on how to identify the warning signs of suicidal behaviours, provide support, and initiate discourse on mental well-being. Professor Paul Wong from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Hong Kong was invited as the supervisor of the Course to ensure its professionalism and practicality.

There are five modules in the Course:

1. The role of a gatekeeper: What can we do?
2. Debunking myths about suicide: Learning the correct information about suicide prevention
3. Identifying warning signs of suicide: Noticing people with suicidal thoughts
4. Active listening and accompanying: Getting through the hard times together
5. Exploring community resources: Seeking help from the community or professionals

Here are five potential warning signs of suicide. As we observe one with these behaviours, he or she may be experiencing significant distress or even having risks of suicide that require support from those around them and the professionals.

<b>Feeling of hopelessness</b>	Believing their situation will never improve, or feeling that there is no way out.
<b>Social withdrawal</b>	Suddenly withdrawing from friends, family, or social events, reducing social interactions, and losing interest in daily activities.
<b>Unusual behaviour</b>	Displaying atypical behaviours, such as extreme mood swings or a sudden shift from deep sadness to an unusual calmness or happiness.
<b>Talking about death or suicide</b>	Regularly discussing topics related to death, suicide, or self-harm.
<b>Settling personal affairs</b>	For example, drafting a will or giving away personal belongings.

In the face of potential mental health concerns of friends or family members, it is crucial to actively support them in obtaining the help they need. Here are five recommendations:

Active listening	Provide a safe, non-judgmental environment where they can freely express their feelings and concerns. Listen patiently without criticizing or rushing to offer solutions.
Observing behavioural changes	Pay attention to any unusual behaviours or emotional changes, such as loss of interest or intense mood swings.
Providing information and resources	Help them understand the support and community resources that are available, for example, counselling, hotline services, or community centres.
Encouraging help-seeking	Encourage them to seek professional support, emphasizing that seeking help is a courageous act instead of a sign of weakness.
Ongoing support	Even after they begin treatment or appear to show improvement, check in regularly about their feelings with constant care and support.

This press release is published by Joyous Communications as authorized by The Samaritans. Please contact Jason Yiu (Tel: 2560-8669) or Wing Tsui (Tel: 2560-8186) for any enquiries.