

Pair of 12-Year-Olds Dead In 16-Floor Suicide Plunge

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A pair of 12-year-old girls jumped to their deaths Tuesday in the Moscow region town of Lobnya, prompting a children's rights ombudsman to call for a federal program to address the problem of youth suicide.

The girls' bodies were found Tuesday night with wounds characteristic of a fall, the Investigative Committee said in a statement. Witnesses told investigators that they saw the girls jump from the roof of a 16-story apartment building with their hands clasped together.

Moscow region prosecutors have opened an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the deaths for signs of foul play, the statement said.

The girls jumped to their deaths because they were afraid of being punished for skipping school for two weeks, media reports said.

Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said Wednesday that the problem of youth

suicide should be addressed on the federal level.

"We must find out what pushed the children to commit such a frightful act. It has been said on multiple occasions that youth suicides have become one of the troubles of our time. It's obvious that this problem must be solved on the governmental level. A comprehensive program is needed," Astakhov said in comments carried by his press service.

Prosecutors have investigated past incidents of youth suicide for signs of criminal wrongdoing, including the cases of two St. Petersburg children jumping to their deaths in October and of two 18-year-old girls jumping from a 14-story building in Moscow a month before, Gazeta.ru reported. No guilty parties were identified in either case.

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