
FOR FACILITATORS ONLY

SUICIDE PROTOCOL

Suicidal ideation—thoughts about suicide—may be as detailed as a formulated plan without the suicidal act itself. The range of suicidal ideation varies greatly from detailed planning, role playing, self-harm and attempts, which may be deliberately constructed to be discovered, or where death may be fully intended.

Sometimes threats are vague or ambiguous, and/or may be aimed at a future event or time. These threats should also be taken seriously. If you are concerned about a participant being a threat to him or herself, follow the guidelines below.

If you do not have the training or knowledge to conduct a suicide risk assessment and determine the safety of a participant, call 911.

GUIDELINES

Ask the following questions in order to gain a better understanding of the scope of imminent danger:

- ☐ Does the participant want to attempt suicide?
- ☐ Does the participant have a plan to attempt suicide?
- ☐ Does the participant have the means to carry out that plan?
- ☐ Has the participant ever attempted suicide in the past?
- ☐ If so, what methods of attempt have been used in the past?

The answers to these questions will help emergency services determine the depth of the situation. If the participant has a plan and access to a lethal means, is planning to make an attempt very soon, or is currently in the process of making an attempt, this person is in imminent danger and should not be left alone. Call 911 immediately.

RESOURCES

- ☐ **Emergency:** 911
- ☐ **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- ☐ **Crisis Text Line:**
text TALK to 741741

**When a person's life is in danger,
safety takes priority over privacy.**

MORE STEPS

- ☑ **Contract with the person** not to act on this decision. “Will you promise to wait and not act on your feeling for the next 24 hours? Can you promise me this?”
- ☑ Tell the person that when they are a danger to themselves, you **cannot** maintain professional confidentiality.
- ☑ Inform a family member or friend who can go to the person’s home to remove potentially harmful objects such as sharps, glass, drugs, belts and electrical cords.
- ☑ **Promote hope** by listening to the participant. Try not to interrupt them and be willing to sit with them as they talk about the reasons why they want to die. Let them get all those reasons out, and then listen as they come up with their own reasons to live. Do not tell the participant what you think their reasons for living should be, as what you think are reasons to live may be stressors to the participant. While listening, do not rush to judgment. Let them know they are not alone, and that help is available.
- ☑ **Share referrals.** Have your resources on hand. While arranging for help, stay with the participant. Do not leave them alone. Form a safety net. Ask the participant if there is anyone else they feel comfortable talking to (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, friends, priests, professors, mentors or coaches).