Suicide Prevention & Awareness Information

Each year, about 4,000 Canadians die by suicide. Suicide affects people of all ages, with young people and middle-aged men at higher risk. Women are more likely to attempt suicide, while men are more likely to die by suicide. People thinking about suicide often feel overwhelmed, hopeless, or alone, and mental health challenges may also play a role.

What Is Suicide Prevention?

Suicide prevention involves recognizing when someone may be struggling, listening to their concerns, helping them stay safe, and connecting them with the support they need.

People with developmental disabilities may also experience thoughts of suicide and may express their feelings in different ways. Staff should take all concerns seriously and pay attention to changes in behaviour or communication.

What Is the Role of Support Staff?

1. **NOTICE:** Watch for changes in words, mood, behaviour and daily routines
2. **ASK:** Check in calmly and directly if you are concerned.
3. **SUPPORT:** Listen without judgment and take the person seriously.
4. **ACT:** Get appropriate help promptly and follow emergency procedures.
5. **REPORT:** Tell the designated supervisor/on-call contact and document facts.

Your responsibility is to respond and obtain help—not to decide alone whether a person is "really" at risk.



What Are the Warning Signs of Suicide?

The acronym ***IS PATH WARM*** is a helpful way to remember common warning signs of suicide.

I	Ideation	Thinking or talking about suicide
S	Substance Use	Problems with alcohol or drugs
P	Purposelessness	Feeling there is no purpose to live
A	Anxiety	Feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope
T	Trapped	Feeling there is no way out
H	Hopelessness	Feeling like things will never get better
W	Withdrawal	Avoiding people or activities
A	Anger	Unusual or intense anger
R	Recklessness	Taking unusual or harmful risks
M	Mood Changes	Sudden or significant changes in mood

Warning signs may look different for communicate using alternative methods

Risk Factors and Protective Factors

⚠ **RISK FACTORS — Things That May Increase Risk**

Some situations and experiences can increase a person's risk of suicide, including:

- Previous suicide attempts
- Losing someone close to suicide
- Problems with alcohol or drug use
- Mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia
- Feeling alone, being bullied or treated unfairly, or having little support
- Easy access to things that could cause serious harm, such as medications or weapons

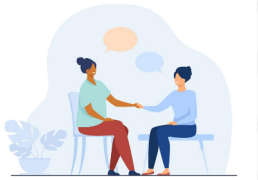
🛡 **PROTECTIVE FACTORS — Things That May Reduce Risk**

The following supports can help lower a person's risk of suicide:

- Having trusted people to talk to and ask for help
- Feeling connected to family, friends, culture, and community
- Taking part in activities they enjoy
- Getting professional help when needed
- Learning healthy ways to manage stress and difficult feelings
- Having a personal safety plan when needed

Protective factors are helpful, but they do not mean a person is free from risk.

Communication: What Can You Say?



If someone shows signs of thinking about suicide, speak calmly, listen without judgment, and take their concerns seriously. Use clear language and any communication tools the person needs.

- **Start a conversation:** "I've noticed you seem upset. Do you want to talk about what's happening?"
- **Ask directly:** "Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Are you thinking about ending your life?"
- **Listen and offer support:** Give the person time to talk. "Thank you for telling me. I'm here to help."
- **Connect them with help:** Contact your supervisor, follow agency procedures, and help the person access appropriate supports, such as a mental health professional or 9-8-8.
- **Act if there is immediate danger:** Call 911 and stay with the person if it is safe to do so.

Remember: Asking about suicide does not put the idea in someone's head. Listen without judgment, take concerns seriously, and never promise secrecy. If they don't want to talk to you, encourage them to speak with someone they trust.

How to Respond When You Are Concerned

IMMEDIATE DANGER OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT

1. CALL 911 and follow instructions.
2. STAY with the person if it is safe.
3. FOLLOW agency emergency procedures.
4. KEEP the person safe while waiting for help, without putting yourself at risk.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR WARNING SIGNS

1. LISTEN calmly and take concerns seriously.
2. ASK directly about suicide.
3. CONTACT your supervisor or on-call support right away.
4. CONNECT the person with appropriate support.
5. CONFIRM who is responsible for follow-up.

Staff should follow emergency procedures whenever there is immediate danger, even if a supervisor has not yet been reached.

Person-Centred Support

Person-centred support means respecting each person's feelings, choices, communication needs, and dignity.

- Stay calm, listen, and take their feelings seriously.
- Use simple words, pictures, gestures, or communication tools when needed.
- Help them connect with people they trust while respecting their privacy and safety.
- Follow their individual support or safety plan.
- Never rely on a promise not to self-harm instead of taking action to keep them safe.

Remember: Some people may show distress through changes in behaviour, routines, facial expressions, or communication rather than words. Take these changes seriously.



Reporting and Documentation

Follow **hs040 Incident Reporting** procedures and document:

- What happened, including what you saw or heard and the person's exact words when possible.
- The date, time, and location of the concern.
- Who you contacted and any instructions you received.
- What actions were taken and how the person responded.
- Any follow-up needed and who is responsible.

Remember: Report concerns promptly, record only the facts, and share information only with those who need to know.

Crisis Supports

Immediate danger: 911 | Canada-wide suicide crisis support: Call or text 9-8-8
BC Suicide Crisis Line: 1-800-784-2433 | BC Mental Health Support: 310-6789