

Suicide Prevention for Volunteers

Annual Volunteer Training



Why a Suicide Prevention Training?

Suicide is a
nationwide
concern that
impacts everyone.

Suicide Statistics

Every year, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) gathers information on suicide in the United States.

The following data is from 2016:

1. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.
2. Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death overall in Washington State.
3. Each year, approximately 44,965 Americans die by suicide.

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Suicide Statistics

4. In 2016, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide at 51.01%.

The next common method was suffocation (including hanging) at 25.89%.

The third most common method was poisoning at 14.90%.

5. The suicide death rate in a population of 100,000 people is:

a. 13.3 suicide deaths per 100,000 - Nationally

b. 15.4 suicide deaths per 100,000 – Washington State

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Suicide Statistics

6. On average, there are 123 suicides per day in the United States.
7. On average, one person dies by suicide every eight hours in Washington State.
8. Nearly five times as many people die by suicide in Washington State annually than by homicide.

Suicide Prevention

In this presentation, we will go over the Suicide Prevention steps:

- Recognize the potential indicators for risk of suicide
- Assess
- Respond





Recognize

Mental Illness & Suicide Risk

At the time of their death, a high percentage of people who complete suicide have a diagnosable mental illness.

Suicide Risk Factors



Risk Factors can be:

- Individual
- Social
- Historical
- Community Based

What are some potential risk factors YOU can think of?

Risk Factors

Everyone is different. Someone could have several risk factors and not be suicidal. Someone else may only have one risk factor and attempt suicide.

It is important to be aware of the risk factors and to think about what they look like. This can help us to recognize when someone might be at a greater risk for suicide.



IS PATH WARM

is a memory aid used by the American Association of Suicidology to cover the warning signs of suicide.

- **I**deation (thought of suicide)
- **S**ubstances (increased substance use, usually drugs or alcohol)

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- **Purposelessness** (no sense of purpose in life; no reason for living)
- **Anxiety** (agitation; unable to sleep or sleeping all the time)
- **Trapped** (feeling like there's no way out)
- **Hopelessness** (feeling despair; being without hope)
- **Withdrawal** (pulling away from friends, family, and society)
- **Agitation/Anger** (experiencing rage or uncontrolled anger; seeking revenge)
- **Recklessness** (acting reckless or engaging in risk activities, seemingly without thinking)
- **Mood** (dramatic mood changes)



Assess

Protective Factors

In addition to risk factors, there are also protective factors in suicide prevention.

These are things in a person's life that can help safeguard them from suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Like risk factors, protective factors can also be individual, social, historical, or community based.

Protective Factors

Examples of some protective factors:

- Having hobbies
- Being connected to friends and family
- Eliminating bullying
- Decreasing stigma around mental health and suicide
- Church and community groups
- Insurance coverage to see healthcare providers
- Understanding the legal system
- Learning good problem solving skills
- Knowing if your family has a history of mental illness



Protective Factors



Just like with risk factors, everyone is different. A person may have dozens of protective factors and commit suicide. However, it is far less likely.

Helping someone put protective factors in place and recognize the ones they already have may help in suicide prevention.

If you suspect someone is considering suicide

Sometimes we might avoid asking about a person's intention to attempt suicide because it might "give them the idea" or be interpreted as an encouragement to act.

The reality is that a person considering suicide may have had suicidal thoughts and plans for a long time, even years.

Being candid and direct about your concerns can validate the desperate feelings, reduce the anxiety and secrecy and create an opening for dialogue.

If you suspect someone is considering suicide

What should you do when you suspect a person is considering self-harm? Ask. Be direct, respectful and concerned: “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”

This might sound frightening, and it can be an extremely difficult question to pose, but it is the only way to find out.

Do not try to soften the question by framing it differently, such as, “You aren’t thinking about killing yourself, are you?” This may put the person on the defensive or discourage him or her from opening up to you.

Ask the Question

Use the following tips to prepare to ask someone if they are contemplating suicide:

- Consider what words you are comfortable using, but be direct.
- Ask them if they are contemplating suicide.
- Think about how someone might try to evade or avoid answering. Use this knowledge to help frame your question(s).
- Consider asking about what is going on in the person's life or what might be causing them distress.
- Be prepared to listen—asking will likely open up communication.
- It is important to practice. Asking someone a question like this can be very difficult in real life. Practicing can help you prepare.

If someone is considering suicide

If you've asked the question(s) and the person responds "yes", listen empathically to the story, encourage him or her to get help, tell the person that you are required to report their disclosure, then tell a DOC Employee.

Do not leave the person alone.

Finding the courage to ask this important question can mean the difference between life and death.



Respond

Managing Means

- No matter where you work, we can all help to “manage means.”
- “Means” are the items or ways that a person might use to attempt suicide.
- While we might not be able to control every available means, we can take steps to limit access or notice when things don’t seem right.



Managing Means: Prison Settings

The goal is to identify potential means and think about how you can limit access to them.

- Think of two or three locations in your facility where incarcerated individuals spend time or have access.
- For each location, what means are available for someone to attempt suicide?
- How is access to these means limited? What else could be done?

Managing Means: Community Settings

Recall the CDC's statistics from 2016:

- Firearms were the most common method of death by suicide at 51.01%,
- The next most common method was suffocation (including hanging) at 25.89%,
- The third most common method was poisoning at 14.90%.

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Managing Means: Community Settings

Reflect on the following questions:

- What other means are available to people in the community, whether they are on supervision or not?
- How does society attempt to manage means? What safeguards, regulations, or monitoring do we have in place?

For example: many cities have fences along bridges/overpasses to prevent people from jumping off.

- How might you be “tipped off” or become aware that someone is attempting to get around these safeguards?

Roles & Responsibilities

Whether by managing means or a specific job function, we all have a responsibility when it comes to suicide prevention.

Different roles have different responsibilities when it comes to suicide prevention; however, we are all part of DOC. It is the responsibility of every one of us to do our best and to do something with any information we might receive.

At the very least, pass along any observations or information you may have if you suspect that someone is at risk of attempting suicide.



References

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Congratulations!

You have successfully completed the online training for

Suicide Prevention

Volunteer Training

Please print this certificate, write your name and today's date on it, and submit it to your Volunteer Specialist/Community Partnership Program Coordinator (CPPC).

You can submit this form by any of the following means: Mail the form in, scan/send copy in an email, or take a photo of the signed document and email. Don't forget to keep a copy for your records!

Print Name

Signature

Date