

School-Appropriate Response and Screening Practices

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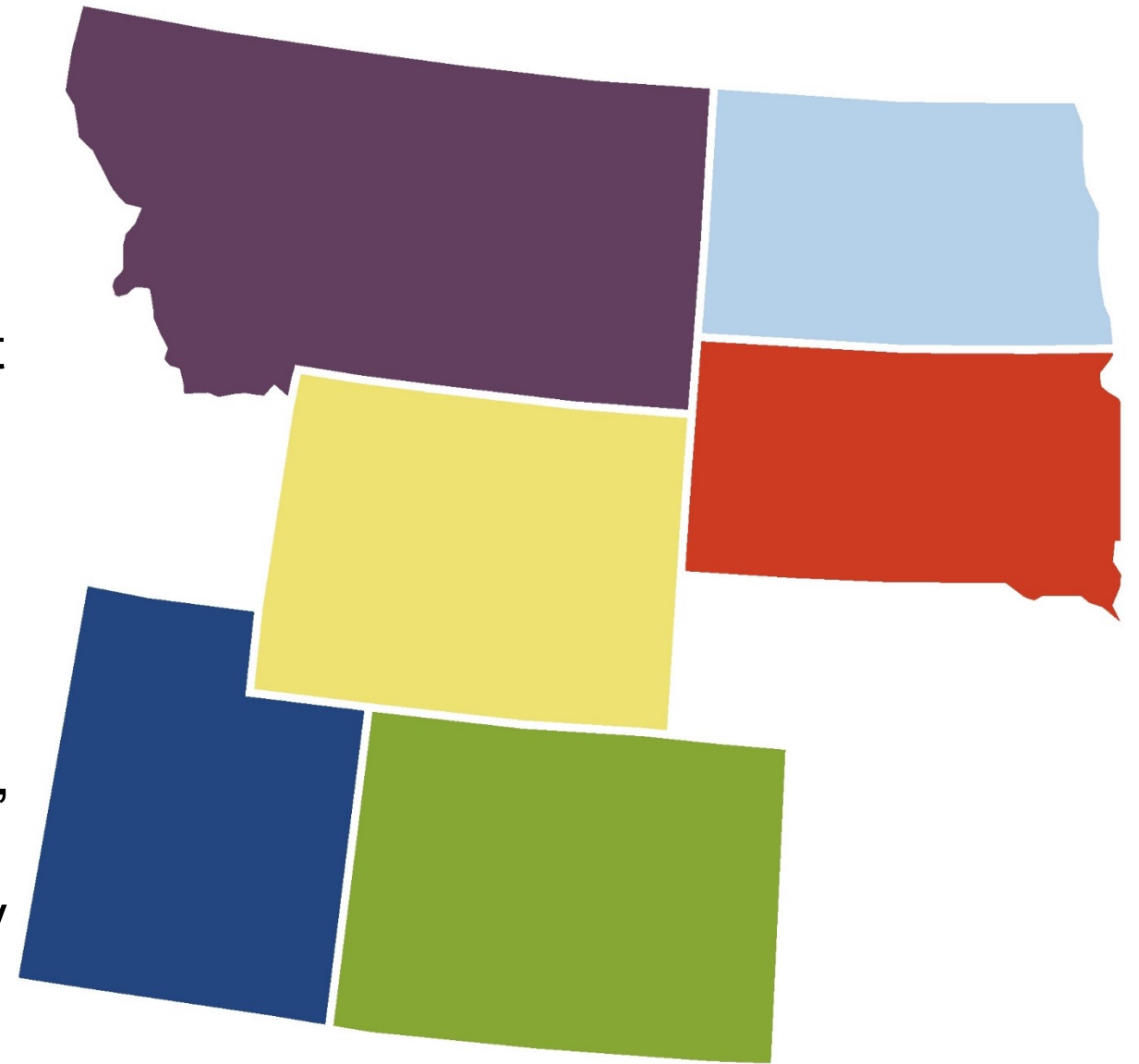
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The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses
affirming, respectful and
recovery-oriented language in
all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

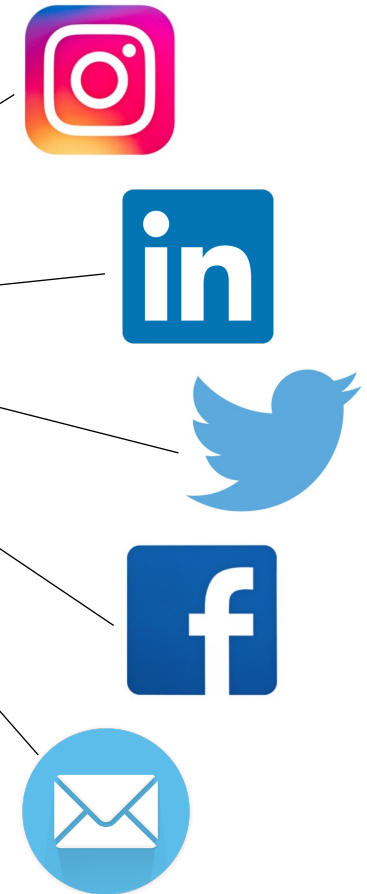
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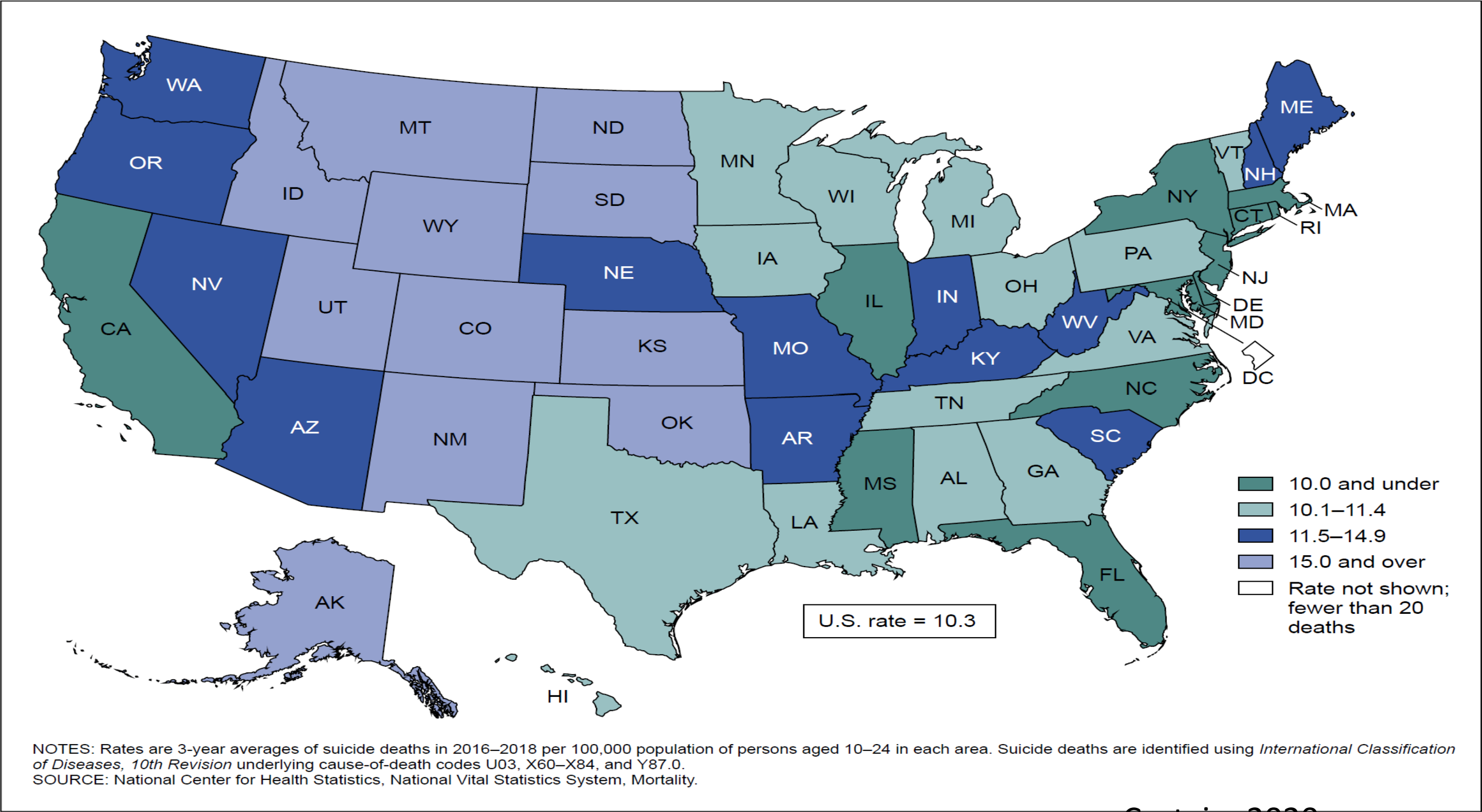
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This in-service is not intended to replace advanced training in suicide response and risk assessment. Please refer to resources at the end of this training for programs

Figure 2. Suicide death rates for persons aged 10–24: United States, 2016–2018



“Research shows that a brief screening tool can identify individuals at risk for suicide more reliably than leaving the identification up to a clinician’s personal judgment or by asking about suicidal thoughts using vague or softened language.”⁵

When is a Screener Used?

- ▶ Suicide Screening: A standardized instrument or protocol to identify suicide risk. Can be done universally or selectively.

Conducted when:

- 1. Student informs you of attempt, thoughts, or plans*
- 2. Peer or staff learn of an attempt*
- 3. Staff believes student is at risk*

- ▶ Suicide Assessment: comprehensive evaluation done by clinician to confirm risk, estimate immediate danger, determine course of treatment

Basic Guidelines

Defer to your school's crisis protocol!

1. Refer to staff trained to recognize & respond (E.g., School Counselors, School/Clinical Psych., School Social Workers)
2. If unable to locate, alert administration and determine if crisis team needs to be called to assess for imminence.
 - *If yes, call crisis and parents*
3. In emergencies, alert administration, call 9-1-1, and parents
4. Ensure school staff are aware of referral/response protocol and basic guidelines

Helping Suicidal Youth

- ▶ **Show you care** – Listen carefully – Be genuine.

“I’m concerned about you...about how you feel.”

- ▶ **Ask the question** –Be direct, caring and non-confrontational.

“Have you ever thought about killing yourself?”

- ▶ **Get help** – Do not leave him/her alone.

“You are not alone. I will help you get the help you need.”

- ▶ **Emphasize protective factors** that provide a reason for living (e.g., favorite pets, younger siblings or close relationships, future plans/dreams)

- ▶ **Use non-judgmental, non-condescending, matter-of-fact approach⁸**

What's Not Helpful?

- ▶ **Ignoring or dismissing the issue** indicates you don't hear their message, believe them, or care about their pain.
- ▶ **Acting shocked or embarrassed.**
- ▶ **Panicking, preaching, or patronizing.**
- ▶ **Challenging, debating, or bargaining.** You can't win a power struggle with someone thinking irrationally.

What's Not Helpful?

- ▶ **Giving harmful advice** such as suggesting the use of drugs or alcohol to “feel better”.
- ▶ **Promising to keep a secret.** The suicidal person is sharing his/her feelings hoping someone will help their pain, even though they may verbally contradict this.

Identifying Risk^{8,10}

1. Identify risk factors; especially those that can be reduced
2. Identify warning signs
3. Identify and mobilize protective factors

*** Note: This information is helpful for safety planning later***

1. Identify Risk Factors ^{8,10}

Individual	Behaviors	Family	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Previous attempts-Mental Health-Hopelessness*-Impulsiveness-Poor prob. solving-Poor coping-Low stress tolerance-Social alienation/isolation-Perception of being a burden-Loss-Hx of abuse,bullied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Substance Use-Self-Injurious-Delinquency-Aggression-Risky sexual behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Family suicidal hx-Parental MH-Family stress/dysfunction-Stressful life events-lack of social/family support-Death-Family financial difficulty-Under/overprotective parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Exposure to suicidal behavior of others-Neg. social/emotional school environment-Expression/acts of hostility-Lack of respect & fair treatment-Lack of safety/security at school-Access to lethal means-Exposure to stigma, discrimination-Limited access to MH care

2. Identify Warning Signs^{8,10}

General^{5,6}

- ▶ Reckless or engages in risky activities
- ▶ Increased alcohol/drug use
- ▶ Feeling trapped, like there's no way out
- ▶ Anxiety, agitation, dramatic mood changes
- ▶ Hopeless about the future*; severe or overwhelming emotional pain or distress*
- ▶ Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge or recent increased agitation or irritability*
- ▶ Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time*
- ▶ Withdrawal/changes in social connections*
- ▶ Anger out of character or context*

* Items marked with (*) also indicate warning signs for youth \leq 25 years of age

Acute^{5,6}

- ▶ Threatening to hurt or kill self or talking about wanting to die (sometimes this is seen as verbal clues)
- ▶ Looking for ways to kill self by seeking access to lethal items
- ▶ Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide*. Artwork?
- *Is there a detailed plan for attempt (how, where, when)?*

Warning Signs for Youth (<25 yrs) ⁸

The risk for Suicide increases if the warning sign is:

- ▶ New and/or
- ▶ Has increased, *and*
- ▶ Possibly related to anticipated or actual painful event, loss, or change

3. Identify & Mobilize Protective Factors ^{8,10}

Individual	Social	School
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Emotional well-being/intelligence▶ Adaptability, resilience, internal control of one's environment▶ Strong problem-solving, coping, conflict resolution skills▶ Frequent, vigorous exercise or participation in sports▶ Spiritual faith. Cultural beliefs that affirm life▶ Frustration tolerance and emotional regulation▶ Body image, care, and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Connections. Close supportive bonds with family, caring adults, peers; positive therapeutic relationships; responsibility to others (pets, siblings)▶ Parental involvement, pro-social norms, and support for school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Positive school experiences- safe and respectful climate▶ Adequate or better academic achievement▶ Connectedness to school. Part of a close school community

4. Conduct Suicide Inquiry: Ideation^{8,10}

a) Ideation. How long have they been thinking about suicide (frequency, intensity, duration: in last 48 hours, past month, & worst ever).

- ▶ Be direct, caring, and non-confrontational
- ▶ Be developmentally appropriate
- ▶ Be specific. Avoid vague terminology like “hurt”

4. Conduct Suicide Inquiry: Ideation^{8,10}

► Prompt Questions to assess ideation:

- “Sometimes, people in (specify situation) lose hope. I’m wondering if you may have lost hope, too?”
- “With this much stress in your life, have you thought of hurting yourself?”
- “Have you ever thought about killing yourself?”

Frequency, Duration, Intensity

- “How often do you have thoughts of suicide? How long do they last? How strong are they? What’s the worst they’ve ever been?”
- “When did you begin having suicidal thoughts?” Did anything trigger them?”
- “When was the last time you had suicidal thoughts? Have you had thoughts of suicide within the last 48 hours/past month?”

► End inquiry if no evidence of ideation AND no suspicion of minimization or untruthfulness

4. Conduct Suicide Inquiry: Plan, Access, Intent^{8,10}

b) Plan. Is there a plan? How would they do it if they could? Get specifics.

c) Access. Are there means to carry through?

d) Intent. Have they made plans to follow through? If imminent (within next 24 hours, obtain immediate assistance or emergency response. Send to ER)

- Note: Asking about intent to kill oneself is not correlated with suicidality

What to Explore in a Risk Assessment^{8,10}

4. Determine risk level and if crisis team should be contacted.

- * Always err on the side of caution

- * If unsure, seek consult or contact crisis team ASAP!

5. Do not leave alone

6. Document, document, document!

Screening Tools

Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale²

- ▶ Brief screener (4-6 questions) for ideation severity within last month and behaviors within last 3 months
- ▶ Use with clinical judgement to determine risk level and make clinical decisions about care
- ▶ Population: Ages 6+. Available for very young children/cognitively impaired
- ▶ Administration Requirements: Any professional or self-report. MH background not required
- ▶ Additional: Evidence-supported. Includes follow-up screener. Endorsed by: SAMHSA, NIH, DOD, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, Zero Suicide Initiative.
- ▶ Cost: Free

C-SSRS²

COLUMBIA-SUICIDE SEVERITY RATING SCALE

Screen Version - Recent

	Past month	
	YES	NO
Ask questions that are bolded and <u>underlined</u> .		
Ask Questions 1 and 2		
1) <u>Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?</u>		
2) <u>Have you <u>actually had</u> any thoughts of killing yourself?</u>		
If YES to 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5, and 6. If NO to 2, go directly to question 6.		
3) <u>Have you been thinking about how you might do this?</u> E.g. "I thought about taking an overdose but I never made a specific plan as to when where or how I would actually do it....and I would never go through with it."		
4) <u>Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?</u> As opposed to "I have the thoughts but I definitely will not do anything about them."		
5) <u>Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself?</u> <u>Do you intend to carry out this plan?</u>		
6) <u>Have you ever done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?</u> Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, took out pills but didn't swallow any, held a gun but changed your mind or it was grabbed from your hand, went to the roof but didn't jump; or actually took pills, tried to shoot yourself, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc. If YES, ask: <u>Was this within the past three months?</u>	YES	NO

- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk

SAFE-T⁹

► Description: Interview-format to gather information related to suicide risk

► Explores:

- 1) Ideation within last 48 hours, past month, and worst ever;
- 2) Plan (timing, location, lethality, availability, preparatory acts);
- 3) Behaviors (past and aborted attempts, rehearsals versus non-suicidal self-injurious actions);
- 4) Intent

► Additional: Mobile App available. Endorsed by SAMHSA, SPRC

► Cost: Free

Positive Screens



Problems with Levels of Risk

► Suicidality is dynamic.

- Many factors (personal events, availability of resources, etc.) can influence level of severity at any point in time.

► Other factors should be explored when determining severity of risk:⁵

- a) patient's current available and accessible resources;
- b) foreseeable changes (events and stressors) which can influence risk;
- c) compare current risk state to their baseline or worst-point state

Positive Screen- Next Steps: General

1. FOLLOW DISTRICT'S CRISIS PROTOCOL
2. Restrict access to lethal means.
3. Assess need to contact district crisis team. Call 9-1-1 if needed
4. Notify administrator and guardians
5. Provide students with ideation numbers to:
National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (9-8-8), local crisis, local behavioral health resources, and peer support contacts.
6. Don't leave alone, especially for high risk
7. Determine follow-up monitoring plan and behavioral health supports

Levels of Risk⁹

Risk Level	Risk/Protective Factor	Suicidality	Possible Interventions
High	Psychiatric disorders with severe symptoms or acute precipitating event; protective factors not relevant	Potentially lethal suicide attempt or persistent ideation with strong intent or suicide rehearsal	* Contact crisis team* Take suicide precautions
Moderate	Multiple risk factors, few protective factors	Suicidal ideation with plan, but no intent	Contact crisis team dependent on risk factors. Develop crisis plan. Provide resources.
Low	Modifiable risk factors, strong protective factors	Thoughts of death, no plan, intent, or behavior	Outpatient referral, symptom reduction, Provide resources.

Positive Screen- Next Steps: High Risk

- ▶ Don't leave alone, even for a minute. Call for back-up
- ▶ Remove dangerous objects from immediate area
- ▶ Notify administrator/guardians. Ask guardians to come to school.
- ▶ Contact crisis team, or 911 if necessary.
- ▶ Release only to parent or crisis responder
- ▶ Obtain written consent to consult with outside providers
- ▶ Alert appropriate school officials
- ▶ Arrange for makeup work or work extensions without penalty

Positive Screen- Next Steps: High Risk

- ▶ Assign staff as primary point of contact
- ▶ Check-in daily for the first couple of weeks
- ▶ Temporarily increase counseling supports if in school
- ▶ Temporarily increase phone check-ins if not in school
- ▶ Conduct re-entry meeting to create (school) safety plan from current recommendations, concerns, supervisory and monitoring needs
- ▶ **Document** assessment results, who contacted, action plan

Positive Screen- Next Steps: Moderate Risk

- ▶ Keep safe and don't leave alone
- ▶ Notify administrator and contact guardians
- ▶ Provide crisis/emergency and local resources.
- ▶ Refer to community provider. Obtain written consent to consult.
- ▶ Contact crisis team if necessary
- ▶ Release only to parent or crisis responder
- ▶ Create safety plan for home and school
- ▶ If student left school for crisis, implement re-entry procedures & create school safety plan
- ▶ Document assessment results, who contacted, plan of action

Positive Screen- Next Steps: Low Risk

- ▶ Contact parent/guardians
- ▶ Create safety plan
- ▶ Provide crisis/emergency and local resources
- ▶ Document assessment results, who contacted, action plan

Parent Notification⁸

- ▶ Notify for any risk level. Request to come to school (immediately for high risk). Review potential lethal means at home and need to temporarily remove them.
- ▶ For low/moderate risk (hospitalization not required), provide community behavioral health resources. Consider making appointments with parents.
- ▶ If student is danger of self-harm and parent refuses to seek services, a report of negligence to child protective services may be mandated
- ▶ If imminent risk is related to parental abuse, notify protective services
- ▶ Follow-up in a few days to see if outside provider has been secured. If not, discuss why and offer help
- ▶ Document every contact

Confidentiality⁸

- ▶ Positive school experiences- safe and respectful climate
- ▶ Do not share clinical information on details related to their suicidal behavior
- ▶ Only share information with staff necessary to preserve student safety such as that related to their treatment and support needs
- ▶ General classroom discussions violate confidentiality, so avoid these
- ▶ FERPA does allow disclosure of student information without consent to appropriate parties if that information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student. If a student is suicidal or expressed suicidal thoughts, school officials may interpret this as significant threat to health or safety

Screening and Telehealth



Screening & Telehealth in the Pandemic ¹

- ▶ Increase check-ins with those with emotional needs prior to the pandemic, especially if they've experienced past suicidal ideation
- ▶ Have student's contact information and address on hand if you get disconnected or emergency services need to be contacted
- ▶ Know in advance who to refer to if you require consult or if student requires increased supports or emergency response
- ▶ Consider emotional impact of pandemic on suicide risk due to increased stressors (e.g., increased: isolation, familial conflict, financial concerns, anxiety and fear, disruption of routines; decreased social support, etc.) and inquire as appropriate

Screening & Telehealth in the Pandemic ¹

- ▶ Consider increased access to lethal means (e.g., stockpiles of meds, etc.)
- ▶ Increase check-ins and contacts until risk decreases
- ▶ Identify people in student's current environment that can help monitor suicidal ideation and behaviors in-person and remotely
- ▶ Consider researching tele-health options available for insured and non-insured students

Resources



24/7 National Crisis Support Lines

1. National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
8-8

9-

2. Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741-741

3. Trevor Lifeline (For LGBTQ Youth)
1-866-488-7386

4. Trans Lifeline
1-877-565-8860 or translifeline.org

General Resources

1. National Center for the Prevention of Youth Suicide – preventyouthsuicide.org
2. National Institute of Mental Health – www.nimh.nih.gov
3. Rural Health Information (RHI) Hub - <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/suicide>
4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration- www.samhsa.gov
5. Suicide Prevention Resource Center – <http://www.sprc.org>
6. Zero Suicide – zerosuicide.edc.org

In-Service Trainings

1. Kognito At-Risk for High School Educators – 1-hour, online, interactive gatekeeper training program that teaches how to identify signs of psychological distress; approach students to discuss concerns; and make referrals to school support services. <https://highschool.kognito.com>
2. Mental Health First Aid - 8-hour course that builds mental health literacy, and helps to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>
3. SafeTALK Curriculum– a 4-hour workshop that teaches how to prevent suicide by recognizing signs, engaging someone, and connecting them to an intervention resource for further support <https://www.livingworks.net>
4. Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)- evidence-based gatekeeper training program that teaches individuals the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond. <https://qprinstitute.com/>

Advanced Training in Risk Assessment

1. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
A workshop designed for caregivers of individuals at risk of suicide.
<http://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist>
2. Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR)
A one-day workshop focusing on core competencies to assessing and managing suicide risk.
<http://www.sprc.org/training-events/amsr> or amsr@edc.org.
3. Recognizing and Managing Suicide Risk (RRSR)
4. QPRT Suicide Risk Assessment and Risk Management Training Program
5. Zero Suicide
<http://zerosuicide.sprc.org/resources/suicide-care-training-options>.

Creating a District/School Mental Health Emergency Response Plan

1. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists & The Trevor Project (2019). Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary, and Resources (2nd ed.). New York: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention- https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Model_School_Policy_Booklet.pdf
2. Cowan, K. C., Vaillancourt, K., Rossen, E., & Pollitt, K. (2013). A framework for safe and successful schools [Brief]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. - <http://www.nasponline.org/SCHOOLSAFETYFRAMEWORK>
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2012). *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools*. - <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>

Supports During COVID-19

MHTTC. Mental Health Resources for K-12 Educators during COVID-19-
<https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/product/mental-health-resources-k-12-educators-during-covid-19>

MHTTC. Mental Health Resources for Parents and Caregivers during COVID-19 - <https://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-mhttc/product/mental-health-resources-parents-and-caregivers-during-covid>

National Association of School Psychologists. COVID-19 Family and Educator Resources. <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/family-and-educator-resources>

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<https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/34181>
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<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0436>
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<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Preventing-Suicide-A-Toolkit-for-High-Schools/SMA12-4669>

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Evaluation Information

The MHTTC is funded through SAMHSA to provide this training. As part of receiving this funding we are required to submit data related to the quality of this event.

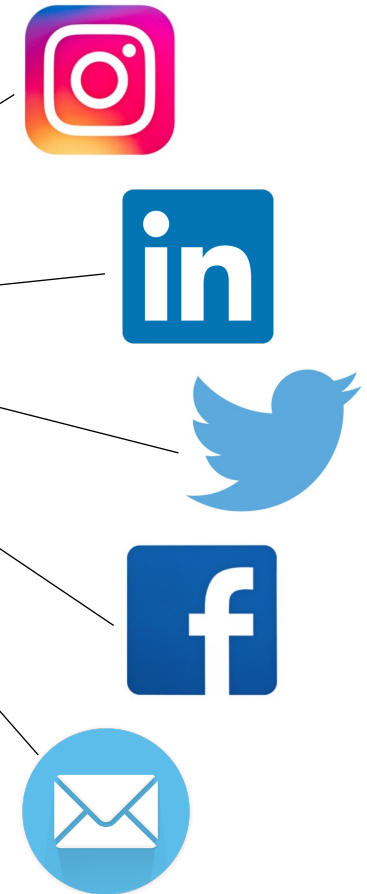
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