

Individual Crisis Response for Suicide Risk

What's your setting?

Brick and Mortar School

Keep student online

If student disconnects, attempt to reconnect; if reconnection is impossible after at least 2 attempts, call 911.

With student still online, report threat to school liaison, local school mental health professional (e.g., school counselor or LSSP) and/or principal. Request they join the student live (in person).

Determine who will take next steps: Does brick and mortar school have their own crisis procedure, and is there a school mental health professional currently on-campus to carry it out?

Yes

Have local school mental health professional immediately carry out the crisis response in-person. (Ensure it involves, at minimum, a risk assessment and parent/guardian notification.)

Follow up within 24 hours with school mental health professional regarding actions taken and outcomes. Consult with school mental health professional regarding next steps (e.g., consultation with parent and planned approach with student at next session.)

No

With school liaison present with the student, follow the procedures for responding to Virtual Schools.

Virtual School

Keep student online

If student disconnects, attempt to reconnect; if reconnection is impossible after at least 2 attempts, call 911.

Contact parent and request they immediately join the student live (in person) and help the student reconnect either online or by phone (synchronous communication format). If parent is unavailable or if student does not or cannot reconnect, call 911. Notify parent immediately after you have called 911.

Evaluate threat: Once reconnected, use Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale to guide questions and help determine level of risk according to known factors (i.e., ideation, plan, emotional pain, resources, and past behavior). Write down all of the student's answers.

With student still online/on phone, determine Level of Risk (High/Moderate or Low), determine appropriate course of action, and notify parent.

High/Moderate Risk

Arrange for parent to take student to mental health facility *Depending on the laws and ethics code governing your profession, you may be required to contact law enforcement first.

If parent refuses or is unable to attend to the student's needs, call 911 and have them transport the student

If concerned that parent will not provide the appropriate support, call 911. Depending on your state's and profession's laws and ethics, you may also need to report to state Child Protective Services

Low Risk

Create safety plan with student and parent and provide resources.

Follow up at or before following session with parent regarding whether safety plan was implemented. If parent is still concerned about suicide, you may need to re-assess risk.

FINAL STEP: ALWAYS DOCUMENT ALL CONTACT, CONVERSATIONS, ACTIONS TAKEN, OUTCOMES, AND FOLLOW-UP!

National Mental Health Resources

E-Therapy

Counseling Services and Information

E-Therapy Counseling Supports:

Go to electronic-therapy.com for more information on counseling supports, and therapy resources including the eCALM room and blog.

[Blog](#)

[eCALM Room](#)

(800) 330-0093

Personalized Resource Plan

If I need support at school, I can talk to:

If I need support at home, I can talk to:

If I need a distraction, I can:

Some coping skills I will try are:

A local crisis line is:

Hotlines:

Crisis Text Line:

Connect to a crisis counselor via text. Visit www.crisistextline.org or Text "START" to 741-741

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Free and confidential support for individuals in crisis or those worried about a loved one.

Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Trevor Lifeline:

Crisis hotline for LGBTQ+ youth who are in crisis or feeling suicidal and need a judgement-free space to be heard.

Call 1-866-488-7386 or visit www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now for chat, text, and call options.

Additional Resources:

Youth.Gov- Mental Health:

This site provides information on mental specific disorders, warning signs, treatment, and prevention on mental health for youth.

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health>

StopBullying.Gov:

This site provides information on how to stop bullying on campus and what you can do if you are being bullied.

www.stopbullying.gov

Suicide Risk Assessment Cheat Sheet

Steps in a Risk Assessment:

Proceed to the next step for each "yes" answer that is given. Always gather more details when a yes is given.

Step 1: Ask Directly. -example- Are you thinking about killing yourself?

If YES ↓

If NO →

Document the student's response.

Step 2: Check for intent. -example- Do you feel like you will act on this feeling?

If YES ↓

If NO →

Document the response. Gather more details and address the student's support system, future oriented behaviors, and coping skills. Ask the student to contract for safety.

Step 3: Check for a plan. -example- Do you have a plan for how you would do this?

If YES ↓

If NO →

Document the response and provide the student with the National Mental Health Resources flyer. Gather more details and address the student's support system, future oriented behaviors, and coping skills. Notify guardian, and ask the student to contract for safety.

Step 4: Check for a timeline. -example- When do you plan to do this?

If YES ↓

If NO →

Document the response and provide the student with the National Mental Health Resources flyer. Gather more details and address the student's support system, future oriented behaviors, and coping skills. Notify guardian, and ask the student to contract for safety.

Step 5: If there is evidence of intent, plan, and a timeline, follow the E-Therapy Crisis Response Flow Chart.

Suicide Risk Assessment Cheat Sheet

General Tips:

- Acknowledge the student's distress.
- Take statements seriously and do not minimize comments.
- Do not show shock.
- Know the physical location of the student and how to reach an adult at that location.
- Be familiar with the risk and protective factors for the student, as well as potential warning signs.

Gather Further Details:

Ask the student these questions to gather more information:

Social Support

- Who do you turn to when you need help?
- Do you have any adults you trust to go to with this?

Future Oriented Behavior

- What are you looking forward to in the next few weeks?
- What are your goals for this week? This month? This year?

Documentation Guidelines:

- Document the results of the risk assessment every session even if it is to note that there was no indication.
- Make sure you document information for thoughts, intent, and plan within your note.
- Make sure you include details gathered from your clinical questions.
- Document further details related to coping skills, social support, and future plans.

Suicide: Protective Factors, Risk Factors, & Warning Signs

Remember to follow the Crisis Response for Suicide Flow Chart for any student that actively exhibits warning signs of suicide.

Protective Factors:

Being aware of what protective factors a student has when starting therapy is key. It is equally important to proactively work with your client to increase protective factors. For example, as a school-based provider, our therapeutic relationship can be a protective factor in helping the student to feel connected to school and others.

- Connection to family
- Healthy coping skills
- Support from teacher or other adults
- Connection to school
- Good peer relationships at school
- Ability to ask for help and advice
- Good impulse control, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills
- Social opportunities
- Positive self-worth and self confidence
- Stable living
- Effective health and mental health care
- Responsibilities for others (such as siblings or pets)
- Religious or cultural beliefs that discourage harm to self
- Participating in sports
- Limited access to means for self-harm

Risk Factors

When a student has one or more risk factors, this does not automatically mean they are a risk to themselves, but should clue us in that support is needed. When you are able to identify a student's risk factors, you can then collaborate with them to reduce or remove risk factors when possible, either directly such as helping with behavioral concerns at school or indirectly such as referring a homeless student for community support.

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of abuse
- Isolation
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mental health diagnosis
- Substance abuse or misuse
- Involvement with law enforcement
- Academic or behavioral concerns at school
- Friends, peers, or media exposure related to suicidal behavior
- Chronic physical illness
- Homelessness
- History of aggression and/or impulsive behaviors
- Access to firearms and other means
- Member of the LGBTQIA+ community
- Family history of suicidal behavior
- Life stressors

Warning Signs

If you see a student with the warning signs below, it is really important to proactively engage with them and their support network to ensure their safety.

- Talking or writing about suicide
- Seeking out means to harm or kill oneself
- Changes in sleeping or eating
- Social isolation and withdrawal
- Loss of interest in activities or things one cares about
- Preoccupation with death
- Marked personality or mood changes
- Verbal statements hinting at suicide such as "nothing matters" or "I won't be a bother to you anymore."
- Giving away prized possessions