

Creating a Safety Plan: Reducing the Risk of Suicide

Research has shown that a person who has attempted to end his or her life has a much higher risk of later dying by suicide.



Often a person who feels suicidal has a difficult time making good choices. As a family member, you can help your loved one make a better choice by reducing the risk. Removing access to firearms and other lethal means is important for individuals of all age groups. Rates of suicide in the elderly (those older than 65) are the highest for any age group. Adolescents are especially at risk of deciding impulsively to escape their pain by suicide.

Reduce the Risk at Home:

- **Guns** are high risk and the leading means of death for suicidal people—they should be taken out of the home or secured. This can include: use of trigger locks and gun cabinets, storage of guns unloaded with ammunition secured separately, or storage of guns off-site.
- **Overdoses** are common and can be lethal—if it is necessary to keep pain relievers such as aspirin, Advil, and Tylenol in the home, only keep small quantities or consider keeping medications in a locked container. Remove unused or expired medicine from the home. Even if an overdose is not lethal, risk of permanent damage to vital organs is high.
- **Alcohol use** or abuse can decrease inhibitions and cause people to act more impulsively on their feelings. Keep only small quantities of alcohol in the home, or none at all.
- **Hanging** is the 2nd leading method of youth suicide for males and the leading method of suicide for young women.
- **Books and the Internet** can provide detailed information about the easily accessible methods. It is critical to be aware of what your loved one is viewing.

Create a Safety Plan:

- Know your family member's "triggers," such as an anniversary of a loss, alcohol, or stress from relationships.
- Pay attention to altered states of mind such as rage and binge drinking.
- Be aware of undesirable life events such as: a loss of an interpersonal relationship, pregnancy, physical & sexual abuse, humiliation (bullying) or reprimand.
- Build supports for your family member with mental health professionals, family, friends, and community resources.
- Work with your family member's strengths to promote his or her safety.
- Promote communication and honesty in your relationship with your family member.
- Even though safety cannot be guaranteed by anyone, it is important that steps be taken to reduce risks and build supports. This can help keep your loved one safe.

Intervention provides hope and assistance. You can find help. Know the signs of someone who is at risk.

Seek help!

There are several local resources and agencies that offer free or sliding fee services.

**Warren/Clinton County Crisis Hotline:
877-695-NEED or 877-695-6333
(Toll-free 24-hour crisis line)**

