

# Tips for Suicide Prevention

Developed in Collaboration with Northeast Behavioral Health Partnership  
and the Member and Family Advisory Board

- 1. Be Informed.** Suicide risk increases for those who have had a previous suicide attempt, those who suffer from one or more psychiatric disorders or use drugs or alcohol, and those who have ready access to methods of harming themselves (guns, medications, etc). For more information, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide/>, [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org), or [http://helpguide.org/mental/suicide\\_prevention.htm](http://helpguide.org/mental/suicide_prevention.htm).
- 2. Take Warning Signs Seriously.** Most people who died by suicide didn't want to die - they just wanted to stop hurting. They wish there was an alternative to suicide, but they just can't see one. Because they really don't want to die, suicidal individuals usually give warning signs of their intentions. The most effective way to prevent someone from taking his or her life is to recognize the factors that put them at increased risk for suicide, take warning signs seriously, and know how to respond.
  - **Early Warning Signs** may include:
    - certain intense feelings or dramatic changes in mood such as hopelessness, rage, agitation
    - inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
    - behaviors uncharacteristic of the individual (e.g. acting recklessly, or increased alcohol or drug use)
  - **Warnings of Immediate Danger** may include:
    - Threatening to hurt or kill oneself (always take such comments seriously)
    - Looking for ways to kill oneself (weapons, pills, or other means)
    - Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
    - Making plans or preparations for a serious attempt, including practicing a suicide method/putting affairs in order, giving away possessions
- 3. Be Willing to Offer Non-Judgmental Support, but Know Your Limits.** You might be afraid to bring up the subject, but talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life. Tell the person you are concerned and give examples of what concerns you. Directly ask whether he/she is considering suicide or if he/she has a plan or method in mind. Ask if they have a therapist who could be contacted. *Do not attempt to argue someone out of suicide. Rather, let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone, that suicidal feelings are temporary, and that depression can be treated.* Encourage the individual to get rid of any means to suicide (e.g. weapons, extra medications, etc.). Recognize that your support can be crucial, but you are not responsible for what the individual decides to do, or for "fixing" him/her.
- 4. Seek Professional Help.** No one has to cope with these feelings alone. Actively encourage the person to see a physician or mental health professional immediately if you are concerned. Individuals contemplating suicide often don't believe they can be helped, so you may have to be more assertive in helping the individual find a knowledgeable mental health professional or take them to get treatment.
- 5. Utilize crisis services** which are available 24/7. Consult with a professional about how you can help, and when to call the police for a mental health welfare check if needed.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.
  - Mental Health Center Crisis Line
- 6. If the Person is Actively Suicidal:** 1) **Call 911**, particularly if the situation is unsafe or unmanageable; 2) If it is safe for you, do not leave the person alone; 3) If it is safe for you, take the person to an emergency room at the closest hospital.
- 7. Take Care of Yourself.** Caring for someone who has been suicidal or worrying about someone who has expressed suicidal thoughts takes its own toll. Recognize when *you* need help by tuning into how you are feeling and don't be afraid to ask for your own support.