

Suicide prevention and intervention: What you need to know

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You may be surprised to learn that suicide is currently the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. In 2017 alone, there were an estimated 1.4 million suicide attempts by Americans. As staggering as these numbers are, we'd like to focus on what can be done to mitigate these statistics. The front lines in the battle against suicide are **prevention** and **intervention**. According to the CDC, suicide prevention should incorporate reducing factors that increase risk and increasing factors that help with resilience and/or coping.

Please read through the information below, which can be used to both prevent and intervene when it comes to suicide and your Anthem HealthKeepers Plus patients.

Suicide statistics

While the following statistics may be hard to read, awareness plays a big role in solving this issue:

- Nearly 45,000 lives were lost to suicide in 2016.
- Suicide rates went up more than 30% in half of U.S. states since 1999.
- There was a significant rise in suicide rate among youth ages 10 to 14.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people 10 to 34 years of age.

- Men are more likely to use more lethal methods, such as firearms or suffocation, while women are more likely to attempt suicide by poisoning or prescription overdose.
- American Indian/Alaska Native youth and middle-aged persons have the highest rate of suicide.

Risk factors

Understanding who is at risk is vital to suicide prevention/intervention. The following traits are risk indicators:

- Depression, other mental disorders or substance use disorder
- Chronic pain
- A prior suicide attempt
- Family history of a mental disorder, substance use or suicide
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Having guns or other firearms in the home
- Having recently been released from prison or jail
- Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as that of family members, peers or celebrities

Warning signs

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated

- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

How to help someone at risk

- Ask the question, “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”
- Keep them safe from harming or endangering themselves.
- Be there and promote a connectedness.
- Help them connect to resources.
- Follow up with your patient after determining they are at risk.

New evidence-based practice for health care providers

- Health care providers can help prevent suicide when they understand the risk factors and use evidence-based treatments and therapies.
- The Joint Commission recommends screening all patients in all medical settings for suicide risk using validated, population- and setting-specific tools.
- It is no longer acceptable to contract for safety with patients; you need to remove or ensure safe storage of potentially lethal items.
- Familiarize yourself with the social media outlets in order to identify suicidal content and get help for the person posting the message. Websites such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter and YouTube have built-in safety tools.

Be familiar with the resources

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)** — This is a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Callers are routed

to the closest crisis center within Lifeline’s network of more than 160 centers.

- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)** — SPRC provides technical assistance, training and materials to assist states, tribes, campuses, organizations, professionals and stakeholders develop suicide prevention programs, interventions and policies. SPRC also acts as Secretariat to the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.
- **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention** — This is a public/private partnership that advances the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention through the work of nearly 200 organizations.
- **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator** — This tool is a directory of mental health and substance use treatment facilities in the United States and United States territories.
- **Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Program** — The purpose of this program is to support states and tribes with implementing youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies in schools, educational institutions, juvenile justice systems, substance use programs, mental health programs, foster care systems, and other child- and youth-serving organizations.
- **Tribal Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)** — The TTAC provides culturally relevant, evidence-based, holistic technical assistance to support native communities who seek to address mental and substance use disorders and suicide.

Additional resources

- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention:
[actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org](https://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org)

- National Indian Child Welfare Association:
<http://www.icctc.org/August2013/PMM%20Handouts/Youth%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Toolkit.pdf>
- Indian Health Services Resources: [ihs.gov/behavioral/index.cfm?module=BH&option=Suicide](https://www.ihs.gov/behavioral/index.cfm?module=BH&option=Suicide)
- Veterans Crisis Line: [veteranscrisisline.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

If you have any questions about this communication, call Provider Services at **1-800-901-0020** or Anthem CCC Plus Provider Services at **1-855-323-4687**.

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