



YOUTH SELF-HARM/SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

Board Approved Updates: Nov 18, 2020

Whenever a Club Member alleges that they wish to harm themselves, staff are required to immediately notify the Unit Director and take the youth to a private and safe space.

If the youth has possession of a weapon or is threatening to hurt themselves with any other object, or their own body, the Unit Director must call 911 to have an emergency safety evaluation performed by Police or EMT. If other youth are in the room, or the vicinity of the incident, a staff member should encourage the Club Member to go to another safe space. If the safety of other youth is compromised, staff will lead other youth into another space in the facility.

The first responding staff member and the Unit Director together should complete the steps below. The Family Support Coordinator should also be consulted on steps 4 and 5.

1. ASK

Asking the question ***“Are you thinking about suicide?”*** communicates that you are open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental, supportive way. Asking in this direct manner can open the door for effective dialogue and allow everyone to see what steps need to be taken. Another piece of the “Ask” step is to listen. Listening to a person’s reasons for being in pain, as well as reasons they want to stay alive, are both incredibly important. Help them focus on their reasons for living and avoid trying to impose your reasons for them to stay alive.

2. KEEP THEM SAFE

It is important to find out a few things to establish immediate safety. Have they already done anything to try to kill themselves before talking to you (i.e., taken medication, physically harmed themselves)? Do they have a detailed plan for how they would kill themselves? What sort of access do they have to their planned method? Knowing the answers to these questions can tell you a lot about the severity of danger this person is in. For example, if they have immediate access to a firearm or medications, they may be at higher risk for enacting their plan, and emergency steps might be necessary (calling 911 or taking them to an emergency room).

3. BE THERE

Being there for someone with thoughts of suicide is lifesaving. Increasing someone’s connectedness to others and limiting their isolation is shown to be a protective factor against suicide. This could mean being physically present for someone, speaking with them on the phone, finding others who can help, or any other way that shows support.

4. HELP THEM CONNECT

(Family Support Coordinator will help with this step and the Follow Up step.)

Helping someone with suicidal thoughts connect with ongoing treatment, supports and resources can help them establish a safety net for those moments when they are in a crisis. One way to help them connect is to develop a safety plan (see end of this document). This can include ways for them to identify when or if they start to experience thoughts of suicide, and what to do in those crisis moments. This plan can also include a list of individuals to contact when a crisis occurs, contact for a mental health professional, and resources in the community.

5. FOLLOW UP

After you ask open-ended questions about why the Club Member feels the way they do (What kind of counseling might they be participating in? Who if anyone they have told about how they feel?). If the Club Member already knows how they want to harm themselves, staff should use persuasive and comforting language that encourages the Club Member to consider other options, such as talking to a counselor.

As soon as it is safe to do so, the Unit Director must immediately contact the Chief Operating Officer (COO), as well as notify the parent/guardian to come pick up the Club Member. The COO will contact the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) once notified and will respond to the Unit Director as quickly as possible. Unit Director will be required to file a Boys & Girls Club incident report within 24 hours. Unit Director will conduct a follow-up phone call to the family the following day and keep the COO informed of any and all developments. The Family Support Coordinator will work the youth to create a Safety Plan and will stay in contact to support the youth and family helping to find community resources.

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- **Report all allegations of self-harm, and properly act on statements or allegations of self-harm.**
- **Maintain safety at all times. Staff are not expected to take the place of a licensed professional/counselor, and therefore should not provide any opinions or advice.**
- **Keep all self-harm situations confidential; information should only be shared with Unit Director, Family Support Coordinator, COO and CEO.**
- **Provide referral to community resources, and/or professional behavioral health services – please call 211 or 269-381-4357 to reach our local crisis center, Gryphon Place.**

(Adapted from Boys & Girls Clubs of Contra Costa)

HOW CAN A SAFETY PLAN HELP?

Suicidal thoughts can seem like they will last forever – but for many, these thoughts and feelings pass. Having a plan in place that can help guide you through difficult moments can make a difference and keep you safe. Ideally, such a plan is developed jointly with your counselor or therapist. It can also be developed with a Lifeline counselor who can help you write down actions to take and people to contact in order to feel safe from suicide. In general, a safety plan is designed so that you can start at step one and continue through the steps until you feel safe.

You should keep your plan in a place where you can easily access it (your wallet or cell phone) when you have thoughts of hurting yourself.

The following are essential elements to explore and include in the development of your safety plan*:

1. **Recognize warning signs:** What sorts of thoughts, images, moods, situations, and behaviors indicate to you that a crisis may be developing? Write these down in your own words.
2. **Use your own coping strategies – without contacting another person:** What are some things that you can do on your own to help you not act on thoughts/urges to harm yourself?
3. **Socialize with others who may offer support as well as distraction from the crisis:** Make a list of people (with phone numbers) and social settings that may help take your mind off things.
4. **Contact family members or friends who may help to resolve a crisis:** Make a list of family members (with phone numbers) who are supportive and who you feel you can talk to when under stress.
5. **Contact mental health professionals or agencies:** List names, numbers and/or locations of clinicians, local emergency rooms, crisis hotlines – call 211 for the local agency, Gryphon Place or the national Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255.
6. **Ensure your environment is safe:** Have you thought of ways in which you might harm yourself? Work with your counselor to develop a plan to limit your access to these means.

*Adapted from the Safety Plan Template developed by Barbara Stanley and Gregory K. Brown – see below [Safety Plan Template](#).

Patient Safety Plan Template

Step 1: Warning signs (thoughts, images, mood, situation, behavior) that a crisis may be developing:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Internal coping strategies – Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person (relaxation technique, physical activity):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 3: People and social settings that provide distraction:

1. Name _____ Phone _____
2. Name _____ Phone _____
3. Place _____ 4. Place _____

Step 4: People whom I can ask for help:

1. Name _____ Phone _____
2. Name _____ Phone _____
3. Name _____ Phone _____

Step 5: Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis:

1. Clinician Name _____ Phone _____
Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact # _____
2. Clinician Name _____ Phone _____
Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact # _____
3. Local Urgent Care Services _____
Urgent Care Services Address _____
Urgent Care Services Phone _____
4. Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Step 6: Making the environment safe:

1. _____
2. _____

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The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:
