



## Strategies for Suicide Prevention in the Workplace

**1. Encourage use of screening tools** to identify problems early and connect people to help. Screening helps identify problems early so people can be connected to the support they need before problems become crises. Self-screening tools can be shared with employees to assess their own risk, or administered through trained counselors at EAP or other programs. It is important to provide assurance that screening results are confidential and that screening is a means of encouraging employees to reach out to services and supports, not part of a performance review.

The [Suicide Prevention Resource Center's page](#) on identifying and assisting persons at risk contains useful information about screening practices.

### *Steps to implement screening practices*

- Share self-screening tools with employees and encourage EAPs to use screening tools. Examples include:
  - The [Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale](#) (C-SSRS) supports risk assessment for suicide through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask. The tool is free to use and appropriate for all ages and populations. [Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale](#) for lay people or the [electronic version](#) for self-assessment
  - [Man Therapy](#) web site "20 Point Head Inspection"
- Ensure confidentiality and appropriate use of screening tools
- Have a plan in place for how the results of the screening will guide the user to the appropriate services and supports

**2. Offer Suicide Prevention Training** for managers, supervisors, and Human Resources staff at minimum. [Suicide prevention gatekeeper training](#) is designed to increase understanding of warning signs and how to effectively help someone who may be at risk. There are typically costs associated with training, however the investment is worthwhile.

### *Steps to implement suicide prevention training*

- Identify a training that is appropriate for your workplace. An overview of suicide prevention training models can be found [here](#).
- Contact your local behavioral health agency or your local crisis center to ask about training opportunities. Some organizations offer training online.
- Offer suicide prevention training for managers, supervisors and Human Resources staff at minimum, and for all staff as feasible.



- Ensure managers, supervisors, Human Resources, and Employee Assistance Program staff know what to do if someone approaches them with concerns about themselves or another employee.

**3. Promote behavioral health services & resources.** Many employees may not know where to turn for help, or what benefits are available to them. Make this information readily available and find opportunities to encourage employees to reach out.

*Steps to promote behavioral health services and resources*

- Create an inventory of behavioral health resources that are available to employees, through work and in the community. Make the inventory available to employees by posting in common areas, on the intranet, and within employee packets.
- Promote use of employer-offered health insurance policies and what services are available for uninsured or underinsured.
- Ensure EAP staff are knowledgeable about behavioral health resources and benefits, and comfortable connecting employees to appropriate resources. Advocate that your EAP staff is trained in suicide prevention and risk assessment.
- Display posters, brochures and other outreach materials from Know the Signs, Each Mind Matters, the Suicide Prevention Lifeline, or other organizations in your community. Seeing these materials communicates the message that there is help, and also that your workplace supports people seeking help. Embed the Know the Signs web site on your company's intranet or web site.
  - Visit the [Each Mind Matters Resource Center](#) to see the full catalog of mental health and suicide prevention resources available to you.
- Learn and promote language that reduces stigma
  - [Say This Not That tip sheet](#) from Each Mind Matters
  - [Find the Words](#) with help from Know the Signs
  - [National Action Alliance Framework for Successful Messaging](#)

**4. Provide educational opportunities at work.** Seek opportunities to increase employees' knowledge of behavioral health challenges and suicide prevention, and how to support their own wellness and those around them. This can send the message that the whole employee is valued while sharing useful information about how to promote health and wellness, recognize problems early, and what help is available when problems do occur. They can help reduce the stigma around talking about, and seeking help for mental health challenges and thoughts of suicide.

*Steps to provide opportunities for employee education about wellness and prevention*



- Offer presentations at a “lunch and learn” series or during all staff meetings. Reach out to your county behavioral health agency or your local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness or [Mental Health America](#), or an expert, to ask about workshops or presentations.
- Authorize work time to view a video link/review at least two educational web sites such as Know the Signs, Each Mind Matters, Man Therapy, [American Association of Suicidology](#), [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- Plan events such as wellness challenges and health fairs to share information and engage employees in health promoting activities.
- Share articles and messaging around wellness, recovery and suicide prevention in newsletters, on the intranet, and using social media channels. The [Each Mind Matters Social Media Guide](#) and [Know the Signs How to Use Social Media Guide](#) for more ideas and tools for using social media.
- Learn about how to talk about mental health and suicide in ways that reduce stigma. The [Each Mind Matters](#) and [Know the Signs](#) web sites are great places to start.

**5. Develop a crisis plan** that ensure safe and compassionate response in a crisis or after a suicide. The plan should include strategies for crisis intervention, connecting employees to crisis resources, support reintegration into work from those healing from a crisis or suicide loss, reducing access to lethal means, communication when a crisis has occurred, and postvention or responding after a suicide.

#### *Steps to create a crisis plan*

- Convene a crisis planning team to brainstorm what steps will be taken and assess what resources, training and policies may be needed to effectively respond to a crisis
- Review existing crisis plans, including those for natural disasters, fire drills etc. to determine how these might inform the process
- Review organizational policies around medical leave and reasonable accommodations to support employees experiencing a crisis and in returning to work
- Develop a written plan that includes detailed steps and contact information for key staff
- Include considerations for addressing access to lethal means and offering support after a suicide death.
  - Means reduction strategies include steps to asses risk and ensure someone who may be considering suicide is safely separated from lethal means such as firearms, high places, and heavy equipment. They may also include informal or legal arrangements that promote safety.
  - Postvention after suicide are actions that promote healing and support to those affected, and reduce the risk of suicide among those who are deeply impacted by the death.