

Suicide Prevention

September is Suicide Prevention Month—a time to focus on this important public health issue. As a first step, Lane County H&HS wants to share the following information and resources with all staff and welcomes your suggestions for future efforts.

Background information

“Suicide is a serious public health problem that can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities. “ --Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States (2014)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Oregonians aged 10 to 24 years (2013)
- Lane County’s suicide rate is 40% higher than the national rate. Lane County averages more than one suicide per week.
- Additionally, there are an estimated 10-20 suicide attempts for each completed suicide.

The good news is that we all can help to prevent suicide and support those going through a crisis. However, it takes being aware of the risk factors and warning signs and knowing how to help someone who might be at risk.

Risk Factors

Suicide is a complex issue; frequently a number of risk factors are involved. These include factors related to one’s health, environment, life events and individual or family histories. Some of the major risk factors include:

- Family history of suicidal behavior
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- History of mental disorders, particularly depression
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Feelings of hopelessness, isolation
- Stressful life events and losses (relational, social, work-related, financial)
- Physical illness
- History of trauma/abuse
- Easy access to lethal methods



Warning Signs

The earlier warning signs are identified, the more likely interventions to support the person will be successful. New or altered behaviors are a significant concern. Some of the most common warning signs are:

- Talking about being a burden, feeling trapped, killing themselves, or having no reason to live
- Withdrawing from usual activities, family and friends; loss of interest
- Giving away prized possessions
- Increased anxiety, aggression, irritability
- Significant changes in sleep and/or eating habits

While observing these warning signs does not necessarily mean a person is suicidal, it does mean there may be life issues needing attention. In any case, asking directly and nonjudgmentally if someone is thinking about suicide can indeed be a lifesaver. Such questioning provides an opportunity to explore current and past risks and identify what can be done to help the person through a period of increased suicide risk.

Taking Action

Here are just two of the many suicide prevention awareness campaigns that provide some action steps, messages and resources that you can share:

- Take 5 to Save Lives: www.take5tosavelives.org
- #BeThe1To: www.bethe1to.com

Both campaigns stress doing the following:

- Learn more about suicide prevention and mental health
- Reach out to those who need support—listen with compassion
- Help keep a person in crisis safe by reducing their access to things they might use to hurt themselves
- Check in with the person periodically to see how they are doing
- Share information about suicide prevention.

Resources

There are a number of free resources available to staff, including:

- A **resource list** (attached) which includes a number of crisis lines, mental health resources, support groups and websites you can access if you need support, information or suggestions on how to help others.
- **Suicide Safe** mobile app—this free app from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) equips providers with resources to assess patient suicide risk, how to communicate effectively with clients and their loved ones, and determine next steps and referrals. <http://bit.ly/1NR7CuS>
- **Safety Planning Guide: A Quick Guide For Clinicians**—a resource to develop a safety plan for patients at risk: <http://bit.ly/2bD0eXy>
- **Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM)**—a free online course for medical and behavioral health providers designed to reduce risks for people in crisis. You can access this training on LEAP.
- More prevention information and resources can be found on Lane County Public Health’s Preventionlane website at www.preventionlane.org



If you or someone you know is in need of support or help, don’t hesitate to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or other help line (listed on the Preventionlane website at www.preventionlane.org/suicide-resources).

For additional information and resources, feel free to contact Sandy Moses, Public Health’s Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention Coordinator at Sandy.Moses@co.lane.or.us.



PUBLIC HEALTH
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

preventionlane
www.preventionlane.org