



Assessing for Suicidal Thoughts

People who are depressed or anxious have an increased risk for suicide. People with autism and mental health conditions are also at a higher risk for suicide. This resource will help you know what to do if you are working with someone with autism who has thoughts of suicide.

Ask Questions

If you are worried someone is having suicidal thoughts, the first step is to ask questions. It can be scary or uncomfortable to ask about suicidal thoughts, but asking can help people get the support they need.

- Ask if the person has thoughts about hurting or killing themselves. If they say yes, ask them how often they think about hurting or killing themselves.
- Ask if they have a plan for how they would complete the act of suicide. Persons who have a plan are at a higher risk for completing suicide.



Asking questions can help figure out if the person is experiencing passive or active suicidal ideation.

- Passive suicidal ideation is thoughts of wanting to die without intent to follow through on these thoughts.
- Active suicidal ideation is when a person has feelings that they want to die and either have a plan to die or are in the process of making a plan.

Provide Supports

The next step is to provide supports to help maintain their safety.

- If the person has a plan, try to remove access to items that would allow them to carry out their plan. If you are able, secure all dangerous objects including: sharp objects, medications, firearms, or items that could be used for hanging. If firearms are present, the person may voluntarily agree to have local police secure firearms or to have the firearms secured in another location.
- If someone is in immediate danger, stay with the person until they are in a safe place. Call 9-1-1 if the person is in need of immediate assistance. Emergency personnel can take the person to the hospital for support.

Connect to Additional Supports

There are different options and types of crisis support available to help people experiencing suicidal thoughts.

- Crisis intervention is a resource in every county in Pennsylvania and can provide support on the telephone. Crisis workers can also go to a person who needs help with de-escalation in an emergency.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline connects people with trained professionals who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These professionals can help de-escalate an immediate crisis and help the person to connect with supports in their community. To contact, call or text 988.
- Develop a safety plan that includes crisis warning signs, coping skills, and resources such as crisis intervention numbers. Check out ASERT's Safety Plan resource for tips on how to make a safety plan.

