

Warning Signs of Suicide

- ◆ Someone makes a threat to kill themselves
- ◆ Someone is looking for a way to carry out a suicide plan
- ◆ Someone is talking or writing about death or suicide

Take action, call the Maine Crisis Hotline: **1-888-568-1112**

DO NOT LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE!

In an Emergency, CALL 911

- ◆ If someone attempts suicide
- ◆ A weapon is present
- ◆ If the person is out of control

Don't be afraid. Making the call may save a life.



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

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A poster with an orange background. At the top, the text 'SUICIDE PREVENTION IT'S UP TO ALL OF US' is written in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, on the left, is a red silhouette of a person crouching. To the right of this is the text 'MAINE SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM INFORMATION BOOKLET' in blue. Below that, there are two boxes: the left one contains 'Maine Crisis Hotline 1-888-568-1112' and the right one contains 'National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK'. At the bottom, there are several silhouettes of people in various colors (red, blue, teal) standing and talking. In the bottom right corner, there is a small version of the DHHS logo and name, including the names 'Paul R. LePage, Governor' and 'Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner'.

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YOU can help prevent suicide

In Maine, a person dies by suicide about every two days.

Learn the warning signs for suicide.

Take action. Three (3) steps to save a life.

- 1. Show you care. Listen and express concern.**
“I’m worried about you...”
- 2. Ask about suicide. Be direct in a caring way.**
“Are you thinking about suicide?”
- 3. Get help. Do not leave the person alone.**
“Let me help you.”

Suicide prevention is up to all of us!

Have the Courage to Get Involved

“Unless you have been through the suicide of a youth who was close to you, it’s difficult to fully understand the devastation and suffering caused by this loss to family, friends, classmates, and community members.”

...parent who lost a child to suicide

“I was so tired of the pain...the struggle, I just couldn’t do it anymore. My friend really heard me and helped me get the support I needed.”

...someone who made a suicide attempt

“People who are suicidal are in pain and they need help. Remember to show them you care, ask them if they are thinking about suicide and get them help. Learn more about suicide prevention and have the courage to get involved.”

...Maine Suicide Prevention Program

Facts About Suicide and How You Can Help

The Facts

- ◆ Each year in Maine, about 200 people die by suicide. 4 out of 5 deaths are males.
- ◆ Half of all suicide deaths are by firearms.
- ◆ For every person who dies by suicide, about 25 people make a suicide attempt.
- ◆ In a 2011 survey, almost 1 out of 7 high school youth said they had thought seriously about suicide in the past year.

How You Can Help

- ◆ Be aware of extreme distress in a person. Know the warning signs of suicide. *See pages 2-3.*
- ◆ Be willing to listen to the person.
- ◆ Take it seriously when someone talks about suicide. Stay with the person.
- ◆ Call the Maine Crisis Hotline or get other professional help.
- ◆ Find more about how to help on pages 4-11.

Suicide prevention is up to all of us!

Warning Signs of Suicide

Warning signs are things you can see or hear that tell you someone may be suicidal. If you see or hear any of these signs, act quickly.

Take immediate action. Call the Maine Crisis Hotline 1-888-568-1112 if:

- ◆ **Someone makes a suicidal threat such as: a threat to kill him/herself such as:**
 - “I wish I were dead.”
 - “If ‘such and such’ does not happen, I will kill myself.”
 - “No one would miss me if I were gone.”
- ◆ **Someone is looking for a way to carry out a suicide plan.**
 - They are looking for a gun, pills or another way to kill him/herself.
 - They have a plan about where they can get these things.
- ◆ **Someone is talking or writing about their own death or suicide in:**
 - Text messages.
 - Social networking sites.
 - Poems, music.

DO NOT LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE!

- ◆ **Call 911 if:**
 - A suicide attempt has been made.
 - A weapon is present.
 - The person is out of control or refuses help.

National Suicide Prevention Websites

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)

SPRC provides prevention support, training, and resources to assist organizations and individuals to develop suicide prevention programs, interventions and policies.

www.sprc.org

American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

AAS has resources and information on suicide, suicide prevention and the needs of those who have lost a loved one to suicide. AAS offers these services to people, organizations and schools.

www.suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

AFSP provides information to family and friends who have lost someone to suicide. Its mission is to prevent suicide through research and education.

www.afsp.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMSHA provide resources on suicide, suicide prevention including toolkits for a variety of settings.

www.samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx

Maine Suicide Prevention Resources

For training, education and resources in Maine: Maine Suicide Prevention Program (MSPP)

The MSPP provides training, education and resources on suicide prevention. MSPP is a partnership led by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (MeCDC) in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Other state agency partners are the Departments of Education, Public Safety, Corrections and Labor. To learn more contact:

1-800-698-3624 / 207-287-5359 Maine Relay 711
www.maine.gov/suicide

For free copies of this booklet and other resources: Information Resource Center (IRC)

The IRC has free copies of this booklet and other resources on suicide prevention. The IRC is part of the Maine Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services.

1-800-499-0027 / Maine Relay 711
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/samhs/osa/>

For information and support about mental illness: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Maine)

NAMI Maine has a statewide education and advocacy program on issues relating to mental health. Call for information on training programs, information network or local support groups for families and persons with mental illness.

1-800-464-5767 www.namimaine.org

Warning Signs of Suicide, continued

Find a professional to help if you notice any of the following:

Signs of Depression

- ◆ Mood - sad, irritable, angry.
- ◆ Withdrawing from friends, family, activities.
- ◆ Changes in sleep, appetite or weight.
- ◆ Hopelessness - sees no chance of improvement.
- ◆ Feeling worthless or guilty.
- ◆ Not able to think or focus.

Anxiety Restlessness, agitation, pacing.

Feeling like a burden “people would be better off if I were dead.”

Alcohol or Drug use is increased or excessive.

Feeling trapped with no way out of the situation.

Neglecting appearance.

Drop in performance or increased work/school absences.

These are signs that something is wrong and that help is needed.

“My mom was getting up in age, so I thought her withdrawal from family and community activities was normal. However I started noticing she stopped going to church and was talking about being a burden on me. I talked to her about what I was noticing and encouraged her to see her Primary Care Physician who helped her get into treatment. I am so glad she did.”

Responding to Suicidal Behavior

Three Steps to Help a Suicidal Person

If you are worried about someone's safety: in a conversation these are some steps to follow.

1. Show you care.

Listen carefully, remain calm, do not judge.

- ◆ “I am concerned about you . . . about how you are feeling.”
- ◆ “You mean a lot to me, I want to help.”

2. Ask about suicide.

Be direct and caring.

- ◆ “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
- ◆ “When people are in as much pain as you seem to be, they sometimes think about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?”

3. Make sure the person gets help.

Never leave a suicidal person alone.

- ◆ “I know where we can get some help.”
- ◆ “I will go with you to get help, you’re not alone.”

If you believe a person might be in danger of suicide, it is up to you to see that they get the help they need. Call the statewide crisis hotline (**1-888-568-1112**) or the police (**911**) to keep the person safe if needed.

Where to Get Help

Available 24 Hours a Day

- ◆ **911** - If a suicide attempt has been made, a weapon is present or if the person is out of control.
- ◆ **1-888-568-1112** - Statewide Crisis Hotline is answered by people trained to assess suicide risk.
- ◆ **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Call from anywhere in the U.S. Includes a hotline for Veterans.
- ◆ **Local Hospital** Emergency Room
- ◆ **1-800-222-1222** - Northern New England Poison Center gives information and treatment advice for **poison emergencies**.

To Find Local Helping Resources

- ◆ **211** - Maine Resource Directory gives information on services, counseling, medical help and support groups.

In the Community:

- ◆ Crisis service agency _____
- ◆ Mental health provider _____
- ◆ Primary care physician _____
- ◆ Faith-based contact _____
- ◆ Employee Assistance Program _____
- ◆ _____

If Someone Dies by Suicide

If a suicide happens, it brings a kind of grief that may include shock, denial, disbelief, guilt and shame. It is important to acknowledge the loss with the family. Listening and showing that you care are very important. Local counseling agencies can help.

- ◆ Acknowledge the loss.
- ◆ Use the name of the deceased.
- ◆ Share your presence.
- ◆ Share a special memory/story.
- ◆ Acknowledge the good things.
- ◆ Stay in touch.
- ◆ Recommend Grief Support Center, grief support groups or American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

Grief Support Resources

To find a grief support group for adults or children in your area, call your local or regional hospice or go to the survivor section of www.mainesuicideprevention.org.

Responding to Suicidal Behavior, continued

It is important that a suicidal person:

- ◆ Knows that **hope** exists and **help** is available.
- ◆ Sees other **options**.
- ◆ Gets through the crisis **without harm**.

Lori: Kim, you don't seem yourself today. Is everything OK?

Kim: You know I've been tired lately, but nothing seems to get any better. I'm just tired of living this life.

Lori: Have you told anyone about this? Your husband, doctor or counselor?

Kim: No, they are not much help, and no one will really understand how I feel.

Lori: I'm worried about you. Some of the things you are saying have me very concerned. Kim, Are you thinking about suicide?

Kim: Sometimes, I just can't see any other way for the pain to go away.

Lori: Look, I really care about you. There are other ways to solve your problems. Let me help you out. Could we call the crisis hotline. They can connect you to the help you need.

Kim: Well, I guess so. If you think they can help. But I am still not sure.

Lori: I have a feeling they will have some options for you. Let's call together and I'll go with you if you would like.

Talking About Suicide

Understand Your Feelings

Suicide and talk of suicide often produces strong emotions of fear, anger and disbelief. Be aware of your own feelings about suicide.

Hearing a person talk about suicide may make you overreact or not react at all. You may feel that the person is just talking about suicide as a way of getting attention.

Being mad, instead of understanding, may make the situation worse. Ignoring the threat of suicide does not make it go away. Not everyone feels comfortable talking with a suicidal person. If you do not feel that you can be there for the person, find someone who can.

“I was really scared to ask them if they were thinking about suicide, but I learned that this is the best thing to do. They seemed relieved that someone understood how badly they felt and wanted to help.”

“I practiced asking about suicide with other teachers, and I just couldn’t seem to do it. So the team decided that if I was concerned about a student, I would tell the student that I was worried about them and I would go with them to see the school counselor.”

If a Person Makes a Suicide Attempt, Offer Support to Loved Ones and Others Affected

It is important to get help for the family of a suicidal person. The family may be confused or distressed. They should not have to face the struggle alone. A team can help. This can include medical professionals, the local crisis agency, professional counselors, clergy, schools and other members of the community.

Family members may be:

- ◆ Feeling that their world has been turned upside down.
- ◆ Feeling fear, shame, anger, guilt and denial.
- ◆ Wishing for life to get “back to normal”.

Family members may need support to:

- ◆ Get professional help.
- ◆ Identify personal coping skills and the support they need, *See pages 17 - 19 for helping resources.*
- ◆ Understand the importance of removing guns and other lethal methods from the person’s reach.

Support friends:

- ◆ Friends will also be feeling many strong emotions.
- ◆ Listen, show you care and let them know about resources at school, work and in the community.

Learn more about supporting family members and friends through training from the Maine Suicide Prevention Program and other resources listed at the end of this booklet.

Voices of Experience

1. People who die by suicide often say something about it first.

Most people who die by suicide have talked about their plans with at least one person.

“... always ask, always keep it in the back of your mind, be sure to have those resources available, and never, never underestimate the signals that are coming through or potential signals.”

a Maine counselor

2. There are warning signs that show someone may be suicidal. Ask about suicide.

There are almost always warning signs. Learning the signs and how to help may save a life.

“... but there are definitely more subtle messages that kids give. Just the ability to be comfortable with saying the word suicide is important. Know that the person is probably relieved to hear that someone is asking them if they are suicidal... They might feel that no one else is seeing what’s really going on inside of them...”

a Maine social worker

3. Anyone who threatens suicide should NOT be ignored even if it seems the person is trying to manipulate others.

All suicide threats must be taken seriously. This behavior may be a sign of depression and professional help is needed. Threats are a cry for help.

“...the biggest thing is not to ignore anything. Don’t just brush it off if they say, ‘I think I’m going to kill myself’ and they say ‘Oh, I’m only kidding.’ Don’t just brush it off.”

a Maine teacher

Talking About Suicide, continued

Asking about suicide does not increase the risk of suicide. It is very important to ask if you are concerned about someone. The fact that you ASK about suicide is much more important than how you ask.

When someone talks about suicide, it must be taken seriously.

How to do it:

- ◆ Listen with your full attention, take your time, be patient.
- ◆ Speak slowly, softly, calmly.
- ◆ Do not ignore the pain.
- ◆ Reassure, be positive.

What to do:

- ◆ Name people the person trusts for support and help.
- ◆ Make a plan for getting help, building hope.
- ◆ Know your limits. Do not be the only person giving support.

What is not helpful:

- ◆ Acting shocked or angry.
- ◆ Interrupting.
- ◆ Offering advice.
- ◆ Minimizing the problem.
- ◆ Saying “I know how you feel,” “if you only tried harder” or “you’re joking, right?”

Keep everyone safe:

- ◆ Never ignore the behavior.
- ◆ Never agree to keep a secret.
- ◆ Never leave a person alone if you think they are not safe.
- ◆ Never try to forcefully remove a weapon.

Talking About Suicide, continued

Buddy Talks to Ray

Buddy: Hey man, you really looked messed up last night, how's the head this morning?

Ray: Kind of thick; I don't remember seeing you at all.

Buddy: I've gotta tell you, you scared me with some of the stuff you said; that's why I took your car keys. I'm really worried about you.

Ray: Don't be, I was just ticked at DJ; he's always on me. On top of that Emily dumped me. I don't know how much more I can take.

Buddy: Hey, we need to look after you. With what you said and the way you were acting last night, I don't know... are you thinking of killing yourself?

Ray: What if I am? It's none of your business.

Buddy: Yes it is, I care about you Ray. I feel you're in trouble and I want to help you.

Ray: It's not on you, I just need some time to get my head straight.

Buddy: Don't do it man. We're gonna get you some help. Our EAP office has helped some other folks. Let's go talk to them right now. Let's go.

What Helps to Protect Against Suicide?

Protective factors are the positive things in someone's life that reduce the potential of suicide and other high-risk behaviors. Protective factors include:

Coping Skills and Personal Traits

- ◆ Good decision making, anger management, conflict resolution, problem solving and other life skills.
- ◆ A sense of personal control.
- ◆ A healthy fear of risky behavior and pain.
- ◆ Hope for the future.

Connections

- ◆ Religious/spiritual beliefs about the meaning and value of life.
- ◆ Positive relationships with family, friends, school, or other caring adults.
- ◆ Responsibilities at home, work or in the community.

Health and Home

- ◆ A safe and stable environment.
- ◆ Staying drug and alcohol free.
- ◆ Access to health care.
- ◆ Taking care of self.

**Protective factors can
be developed over time.**

What Puts Someone at Risk for Suicide?

Many things can increase someone's risk for suicide. Risk factors are things that happened in the past or are happening now that cause stress and make it hard to cope.

Suicide is not caused by just one thing. Risk factors affect everyone in different ways.

Risk factors most often linked with suicidal behavior include:

- ◆ One or more past suicide attempts (strongly linked to future suicide risk).
- ◆ Mental illness.
- ◆ Exposure to other suicides.
- ◆ Access to firearms or other lethal means.
- ◆ Losses of any kind.
- ◆ A history of abuse or trauma.

Other common risks factors are:

- ◆ High impulsivity.
- ◆ Harassment and bullying.
- ◆ Alcohol and substance abuse.
- ◆ Lack of coping or problem-solving skills.

Save a Life: Remove Guns or Other Lethal Methods

Access to lethal means for a suicidal person can be deadly. Removal of guns, pills, ropes, etc. from the home of a person in crisis saves lives. It gives the suicidal person time to get help. Think of this in the same way as keeping the car keys away from someone who has been drinking.

- ◆ Firearms are the most common method of all suicides. Other leading methods are hanging and poisoning.
- ◆ Research shows the risk of suicide doubles when a gun is in the home of a suicidal person.
- ◆ Alcohol and drugs can cause people to act without thinking.
- ◆ Medication is frequently used as a means for suicide.

What can you do to help protect a suicidal person?

- ◆ Always ask about guns and other lethal means.
- ◆ Remove access to all types of guns if it is safe to do so.
- ◆ Many police departments will take temporary possession of guns from people during a crisis. Check with police about gun locks or disposal of guns. Never bring a gun to the police; call and ask for assistance.
- ◆ Lock up all pills, drugs and alcohol. For more information call the **Northern New England Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222.**

While these things can help, it is not possible to completely suicide-proof a home. If you are worried that someone is suicidal, call the crisis hotline.

A Note About Depression

Depression is a treatable medical illness. Most suicidal people suffer from depression to some degree. Depression often comes on slowly and can go undiagnosed until a crisis occurs. It is a leading risk factor for suicide.

Depression may leave a person feeling “too tired” to carry out a suicide plan. When depression begins to lift, this might be a very dangerous time because the person has the energy to act on suicidal thoughts.

A doctor should be seen about any of these signs, especially if they have lasted for **2 weeks or more**.

Signs of Depression Include:

- ◆ Depressed mood - sad, tearful, or irritable.
- ◆ Loss of interest or pleasure in life.
- ◆ Withdrawing from family and friends.
- ◆ Sleeping too much or too little.
- ◆ Change in weight or appetite.
- ◆ Inability to think or concentrate, confused.
- ◆ Feeling hopeless, worthless, guilty.
- ◆ Thinking about death or suicide.

How to Use the Maine Crisis Hotline

If you are worried about someone, you can call the Maine Crisis Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A trained counselor will provide help.

- ◆ Calling is free.
- ◆ The person calling does not have to give his/her name.
- ◆ The information discussed with the crisis worker will not be shared unless someone’s safety is at risk.
- ◆ A person does not have to be suicidal to call the crisis hotline. Anyone can call to ask questions if they are worried about someone.
- ◆ Crisis workers can give guidance and referral information.

What to Expect:

- ◆ The crisis worker will ask what is going on and ask about everyone’s safety to help figure out what kind of help is needed.
- ◆ If more help is needed, a face-to-face meeting with the crisis worker will be set up.
- ◆ A safe place for this meeting will be discussed. This could be the person’s home, the crisis office, the school, workplace or the emergency room.
- ◆ The face to face meeting will decide what type of help is needed.

The goal of calling the crisis hotline is to get the person the help they need to safely stay at home or in their community.