

Risk Factors and Warning Signs For Families

Suicide Prevention Training Tip Card

This card is to be used as a training aid for communicating risk factors and warning signs as part of the Suicide Prevention for Army Family Members awareness brief.

Risk factors raise the risk of an individual being suicidal; it does not mean that the individual is currently suicidal.

Risk Factors for Adults (Including Soldiers) and Children

- ▶ Previous suicide attempts
- ▶ Close family member who has committed suicide
- ▶ Past psychiatric hospitalization
- ▶ Recent losses
 - ▶ Death of family member or friend
 - ▶ Family divorce/separation
 - ▶ Break-up with girlfriend/boyfriend
- ▶ Poor social skills
 - ▶ Difficulty interacting with others
 - ▶ Problems starting a conversation and making friends
- ▶ Drug or alcohol abuse
 - ▶ Drugs decrease impulse control making impulsive suicide more likely
 - ▶ Some try to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol
- ▶ Violence in the home or social environment
- ▶ Handguns in the home
- ▶ Work-related problems
- ▶ Serious medical problems
- ▶ Poor school performance

Warning signs indicate that a person could be at greater risk for suicide.

Warning signs that an adult/Soldier needs help

- ▶ Noticeable changes in eating and sleeping habits
- ▶ Talking or hinting about suicide
- ▶ Obsession with death (e.g., in music, poetry, artwork)
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Alcohol and/or drug use or abuse
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Giving away possessions/suddenly making a will
- ▶ Feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless
- ▶ Finalizing personal affairs
- ▶ Coworkers, family, friends are concerned

Warning signs that a child/adolescent needs help

- ▶ Noticeable changes in eating and sleeping habits
- ▶ Unexplained, or unusually severe, violent or rebellious behavior
- ▶ Running away
- ▶ Unusual neglect in appearance
- ▶ Drastic mood swings

- ▶ Hostile toward other children
- ▶ Withdraws from peers
- ▶ Gives away possessions
- ▶ Feeling sad or depressed
- ▶ Obsession with death (e.g., in music, poetry, artwork)
- ▶ Physical complaints that are not real
- ▶ Talks about death
- ▶ Your child's teacher or other trusted adult tells you that your child is acting different and may need help

If someone you know is exhibiting these warning signs, take action and be an ACE.

A: Ask

- ▶ Ask the question directly and stay calm, e.g., "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" "Do you want to die?" "Do you wish you were dead?" "Have you thought of how you could kill yourself?"
- ▶ Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow the person to express feelings

C: Care

- ▶ Care for the person. He or she may be in pain
- ▶ Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- ▶ Active listening may produce relief. Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- ▶ Encourage the person to seek help
- ▶ Reassure the Family member that he or she will be helped and will feel better

E: Escort

- ▶ Never leave your Family member or friend alone
- ▶ Escort to the emergency room, primary care provider, or behavioral health professional
- ▶ Adopt an attitude that you are going to help your Family member or friend; this will save his or her life

Your Resources

- ▶ Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (CHPPM)
 - ▶ <http://usachppm.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/readiness/suicide.aspx>
- ▶ Community Mental Health Clinic (CMHC)
- ▶ Church/Chaplains
- ▶ Family Readiness Groups (FRG)
 - ▶ <http://www.armyfrg.org>
 - ▶ Join FRGs in your area
- ▶ Military OneSource (6 free counseling sessions for Service members and their families)
 - ▶ <http://www.militaryonesource.com>
 - ▶ <http://www.militaryonesource.com> or 1-800-342-9647
- ▶ Military Welfare and Recreation (MWR)
- ▶ Medical Treatment Facility (MTF)
- ▶ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
 - ▶ 1-800-273-TALK
- ▶ National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center
 - ▶ <http://www.safeyouth.org>
- ▶ School Counselors
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN)
 - ▶ <http://www.spanusa.org>
- ▶ Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
 - ▶ <http://www.taps.org>

