



<http://utahsuicideprevention.org/>

## Warning Signs, Risk and Protective Factors

### Know the warning signs

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or exhibiting warning signs call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or [click here for local crisis services](#).

The following are warning signs of immediate risk. **Call 911 if you or someone you know is experiencing the following:**

- Threatening to hurt or kill him or herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself; and/or,
- Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means; and/or,
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

### Additional Warning Signs:

- Increased substance use
- No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Feeling trapped - like there's no way out
- Hopelessness
- Withdrawal from friends, family and society
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic mood changes.

## **How to help someone who may be at risk for suicide**

- If you recognize these warning signs or think someone might be considering suicide- Ask them! This does not make someone more likely to attempt suicide and can help save lives.
- If you or someone you know is at risk for suicide, take action immediately! Do not leave them alone.
- Call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 911.
- Take the person to the emergency room or seek help from a mental health professional.
- Listen and tell them there is hope. It can be a great relief to someone in crisis when another person is willing to listen and talk with them about their thoughts.

## **Risk and Protective Factors**

Suicide is a major public health problem in Utah and nationwide. The risk and protection model of prevention states that if we reduce risk and increase protection we can help reduce the likelihood of unwanted outcomes, such as suicide. There are many risk factors that increase the chances that someone will experience suicidal thoughts and behaviors. There are also many protective factors that decrease and mitigate suicide risk and promote positive mental health. These factors may be individual, peer, family, or community factors. Find information about the risk and protective profile of your community at <http://dsamh.utah.gov/prevention/>

For more information on risk and protection in suicide prevention see the [SPRC primer for understanding risk and protection in suicide prevention](#) and the [SPRC factsheet on Suicide Risk and Protection](#).

The following risk factors are courtesy of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center.

## **Risk Factors**

### **Individual Risk Factors**

- Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and certain personality disorders
- Alcohol and other substance use disorders
- Hopelessness
- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- History of trauma or abuse
- Some major physical illnesses
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide

## **Environmental Risk Factors**

- Job or financial loss
- Relational or social loss
- Easy access to lethal means
- Local clusters of suicide that have a contagious influence

## **Social Risk Factors**

- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Stigma associated with help-seeking behavior
- Barriers to accessing health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Certain cultural and religious beliefs (for instance, the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma)
- Exposure to, including through the media, and influence of others who have died by suicide

## **Protective Factors**

- Effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance use disorders
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help seeking
- Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide
- Strong connections to family and community support
- Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation