

Know the Signs: Suicide Prevention

Toby Guevin

Nevada County Department of Public Health

Prepared for Forest Charter and Bitney Prep

September 24, 2021

Panelists

Molly Harrison

School Psychologist

Forest Charter

mharrison@nevcocsa.org

Emily Gallup, MFT

School Counselor

Forest Charter/Bitney Prep

egallup@nevcocsa.org

Laura Gravelle, MFT

**Educationally Related
Mental Health Counselor**

Forest Charter

lgravelle@nevcocsa.org

Before We Get Started

- **Local Crisis Line: 530-265-5811**
- **National Lifeline: 800-273-8255**
- **Crisis Text: Text “HOME” to 741741**
- **Training is being recorded**
- **Anonymous Q&A**

Can you please go back over the warning signs?

☒ Send anonymously

Cancel

Send

Overview

**Know the
Signs**

Find the Words

Reach Out

**Nevada County
Suicide
Prevention**

**Risk &
Protective
Factors**

Questions

Pain Isn't Always Obvious

**KNOW
THE SIGNS**

Suicide Is Preventable



NEVADA COUNTY
Public Health

Know the Signs

Know the Signs



Website:
suicideispreventable.org

Know the Signs

Critical Signs

**Talking about
death or suicide**

**Changes in
mood**

**Changes in
behavior**

**Expressions of
hopelessness
and desperation**

**Putting affairs
in order**



Critical Signs



- **When you see the following signs, seek immediate help:**
 - **Talking about death or suicide**
 - **Seeking methods for self harm, such as searching online or obtaining a gun**
 - **Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live**

Talking About Death & Suicide

- **Statements might be subtle or vague**
- **Statements may be direct or even literal “I am going to kill myself”**
- **Thought may be reflected in something written, drawn or posted on social media**

Changes in Mood

- **Uncharacteristically sad or depressed**
- **Unusually happy or content after a period of significant depression**
- **Uncontrolled anger**
- **Express or act in ways that reflect hostility, bitterness, resentment, or rage**
- **Talk about seeking revenge**

Changes in Behavior

- **Careless behavior**
- **Stop talking to and doing things with others or stop doing activities they once enjoyed**
- **Spend money recklessly**
- **Increased use of alcohol or drugs**
- **Sleep more or can't sleep, seem restless**
- **Appear anxious, shaken or worried**

Expressions of Hopelessness & Despair

- **Don't see how their situation or life could get better**
- **Talk about being a burden to others (family, friends, society)**
- **No sense of purpose**
- **Statements hint at life being pointless**

Putting Affairs in Order

- **Rush to complete or revise a will**
- **Giving away prized or favorite possessions**
- **Giving away passwords to social media and other online activities**
- **Pets**
- **Saying goodbye**

Teens

- **Complain of physical pain, often related to emotions (head, stomach)**
- **Neglect of personal appearance, hygiene and basic grooming**
- **Show a significant personality change**
- **Loss of interest in pleasurable activities they used to enjoy**

Older Adults

- **Persistent sadness, anxiety and fatigue**
- **Preoccupation with death**
- **Saying goodbye**
- **Ignore medical advice from doctor**
- **Neglect personal appearance**
- **Looking for means to self-harm**

Other Considerations

- **Trust your intuition**
- **The presence of one sign or multiple signs doesn't necessarily mean someone is thinking about suicide**
- **There is only one way to find out if someone is experiencing thoughts of suicide — asking**

Find the Words

Find the Words

**Start the
Conversation**

Ask directly

**Listen, express
concern,
reassure**

**Create a safety
plan**

Get help

**What not to
say**

Start the Conversation

- **Be prepared**
- **Compile a list of resources**
- **Practice what you will say**
- **Plan the conversation for a time when you won't be in a hurry and can spend time with the person**

Start the Conversation

- **Mention the signs that prompted you to ask about suicide**
- **Make it clear you're not asking "out of the blue." This makes it more difficult for the person to deny that something is bothering them.**
- **Ask directly about suicide.**

Ask Directly About Suicide

- **Establishes that you and the person at risk are talking about the same thing**
- **Lets the person know you are willing to talk about suicide**
- **Talking about suicide doesn't put the idea into someone's head**

**Are you thinking
about suicide?**

If the answer is “Yes”

- **If you are concerned they may act soon on their thoughts, don't leave the person alone until other help has arrived**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255**
- **Nevada County 24-hour crisis line: 530-265-5811**
- **In-person: Crisis Stabilization Unit/Local Emergency Department**
- **Call 9-1-1 if an attempt is underway or you don't feel safe**
- **Know your organization's policies and protocols**

Listen, Express Concern, Reassure

- **Don't forget to listen**
- **Listen to the reasons the person has for both living and dying**
- **Validate they are considering both options**
- **Highlight that living is still an option for them**

Listen, Express Concern, Reassure

- **Let the person know you care**
- **Let them know you are genuinely concerned about them and taking their situation seriously**

Cultural & Linguistic Considerations

- **Importance of involved decision-making, when possible**
- **Trust, communication and language**
- **Help-seeking**
 - **Professional vs. informal supports**
- **Part of being prepared**

Get Help

- **Provide the person with the list of resources you've put together**
- **Connect them to trained helpers, including:**
 - **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255**
 - **Nevada County 24-hour crisis line: 530-265-5811**
 - **In-person: Crisis Stabilization Unit/Local Emergency Department**
 - **Call 9-1-1 if an attempt is underway or you don't feel safe**

Safety Planning

- **Ask the person if they have access to any lethal means (weapons, medications, etc.)**
- **Remove lethal means from the vicinity (get help from others, including law enforcement, if you need help)**
- **Don't put yourself in danger**
- **If you're worried about your safety, call 9-1-1**

Safety Planning

- **Create a safety plan together**
- **Ask the person what will keep them safe until they meet with a professional**
- **Ask the person to refrain from alcohol and drugs or have someone monitor their use**

Safety Planning

- **Share safety planning resources**
- **Get a verbal commitment the person will not act upon thoughts of suicide before they've met with a professional**

What Not to Say

- **Don't ask in a way that indicates you want "No" for an answer**
 - **Example of what not to say: "You're not thinking of killing yourself are you?"**
- **Don't ask in an ambiguous way**
 - **Example of what not to say: "Are you thinking of harming yourself?"**

What Not to Say

- **Don't promise secrecy**
- **Promise discretion, thoughtfulness and involved decision-making**
- **When someone's life is at risk, safety is more important than the person being upset with you**
- **Say instead, "I care about you too much to keep a secret like this."**

What Not to Say

- **Don't tell the person to do it. You may be frustrated or angry, but this is the most dangerous thing to say**

Reach Out

Reach Out: Crisis Lines

- **24/7 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 800-273-8255 (press “1” for veterans)
- **24/7 Nevada County crisis line:** 530-265-5811
- **24/7 Crisis text line:** Text “START” to 741741
- **LGBTQ+ Trevor Project crisis line:** 1-866-488-7386
- **Trans Lifeline (7am – 1am PST):** 1-877-565-8860
- **Spanish-language Lifeline:** 1-888-628-9454

Reach Out: Teens

- **CA Youth Crisis Line: 800-843-5200**
- **TEEN Line: 800-852-8336 (6pm – 10pm PST)**
- **Crisis Teen Text Line: Text “TEEN” to 839863 (6pm – 9pm PST)**
- **teenlineonline.org**

Reach Out: Training

- **safeTALK (*in-person only*)**
- **ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) (*in-person only*)**
- **Mental Health First Aid**
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid**

Reach Out: Online Resources

- **Let's Talk Nevada County:**
letstalknevadacounty.org
- **Know the Signs:**
suicideispreventable.org
- **Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition:** **tahoelifeline.org**

Reach Out: Online Resources

www.letstalknevadacounty.org



Suicide Prevention

Public Health

- **Outreach and education**
- **Training**
- **Suicide Prevention Task Force**

Behavioral Health

- **Crisis intervention**
- **Counseling**
- **Trained support**

Risk Factors

- **Family History**
- **Personal History**
- **Substance Use**
- **Trauma**
- **Isolation**
- **Impulsive or aggressive tendencies**
- **Loss (relational, social, work, or financial)**
- **Access to lethal means**
- **Physical illness**
- **Barriers to care**

Protective Factors

- **Effective clinical care for mental, physical, and substance abuse disorders**
- **Easy access to clinical interventions and support**
- **Family and community support (connectedness)**
- **Support from medical and mental health care relationships**
- **Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and nonviolent ways of handling disputes**
- **Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide**

Questions?

Contact Us

Toby Guevin

Health Education Coordinator

Nevada County Public Health

toby.guevin@co.nevada.ca.us

530-847-8030