

# PREVENTING SUICIDE:

information for  
police, firefighters  
and other emergency  
responders



Police, firefighters, and other emergency responders are often the first on the scene of a mental health crisis or suicide attempt. They have a critical role in preventing suicide and connecting people to the necessary mental health or medical care that may be required.

## How you can you help someone in a crisis situation

- Clear the scene and give physical space. Start by introducing yourself and asking for permission to approach. Express compassion in order to facilitate the de-escalation of the situation.
- Take all words and actions that indicate that a person is at risk of suicide seriously.
- Engage with the person and encourage them to talk. Try to assess the risk of suicide by finding out if the person has a plan, has access to the means, has made an attempt before and/or has been using alcohol or drugs.
- Take a non-judgmental approach, express empathy and concern, and show that you care.
- If possible, remove access to anything that could be used for a suicide attempt.
- Contact a mental health specialist, if available.
- Never leave a person at imminent risk of suicide alone. Stay with the person until a family member, friend, or health worker arrives to assist them.

## What you should do following a suicide attempt

- Check vital signs and, if needed, provide emergency first aid.
- If medical attention is warranted, make sure the person is taken to an emergency care facility.
- If the person is responsive, try to communicate in a non-threatening, calm, empathetic and friendly manner.
- Initiate communication by asking open-ended questions. Be non-judgmental and do not make the person feel guilty.
- If transfer to a health-care facility is not warranted, remove anything that could be used for a suicide attempt from the scene and ensure that a family member or close friend is available to ensure the person's immediate safety.
- Connect the person and any accompanying persons to mental health services or community health services to ensure follow up.

## What you should do following a suicide

- When someone dies by suicide, contact the family or closest friend of the deceased, and ensure that communication about the death of their loved one is conveyed very sensitively and with empathy.
- Ensure that support is provided to family or friends and provide details on how to access psychosocial support. Provide contact details of a self-help support group or crisis line, if available.
- As responding to suicide can be extremely distressing to first responders, seek support from your employer or community services, if needed.

**More  
information**



**Preventing suicide:**  
*a resource for police, firefighters  
and other first line responders*



<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/preventing-suicide-a-resource-series>