

Developing Mental Health Partnerships

The strong association between behavioral health problems and suicide suggests that the majority, though not all, of the patients you evaluate for suicide risk may also be in need of mental health care. In many rural areas, accessibility to specialized mental health treatments is limited. Regardless of how far away the nearest mental health care may be, ongoing communication between the primary care provider and mental health clinicians is a key to achieving treatment success. When comprehensive treatment is delivered to patients, recovery becomes an achievable goal in most situations.

Additional resources related to developing these partnerships are available in the Patient Education Tools/Other Resources section of this Toolkit.

In This Section

Mental Health Outreach Letter

To help build strong, collaborative partnerships between primary care and mental health practices, this Toolkit includes a draft Outreach Letter. This letter may be modified to fit your personal style and circumstances and then sent to providers of mental health services to whom you expect to refer patients.

Date

Name

Address

Address

Dear (Mental Health Professional Name):

We at (Name of practice) are implementing changes in our practice to help us better identify and support patients who are at elevated risk for suicide. We are training our staff to better recognize the common warning signs of suicide and to screen patients for suicidal ideation when they present with known risk factors. As we step up our vigilance for suicide risk, we may be reaching out to you for help in assessing and/or treating behavioral health problems, including suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

A Toolkit developed by the National Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Mental Health Program (<http://www.wiche.edu/Mentalhealth>) is assisting us with this practice enhancement. The Toolkit suggests we share with you a newly revised pocket card developed by mental health professionals for assessing suicide risk. It was developed by the nation's leading mental health experts in the field. Although you may already know the information on the card, having it concisely presented in an organized way may be useful. (We will also be using a pocket card from the Toolkit developed specifically for primary care professionals.)

We would like to work with you to assure the best access for our patients to your specialized knowledge and expertise. Since collaborative care requires strong communication, I propose that we set up a meeting to share perspectives and develop a model for collaboration. I will be contacting your office in the near future to explore this possibility.

Sincerely yours,

P.S. As you may know, The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention recommends that health professionals across the board receive specialized training in assessing and managing people at risk for suicide. We are pleased to be engaged in this education and training. In case you or any of your mental health colleagues are interested in trainings tailored especially for them, we are including some sources of such trainings on the attachment which we received as part of the Toolkit.

Nationally Disseminated Information and Trainings on Suicide Prevention Models and Suicide Assessment and Management for Mental Health Professionals

Zero Suicide. The Zero Suicide initiative is a commitment to suicide prevention in health and behavioral health care systems as well as a specific set of tools and strategies. It is both a concept and a practice. The foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under care within health and behavioral health systems are preventable and that the bold goal of zero suicides among persons receiving care is an aspirational challenge that health systems should accept. It is a key concept of the 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, a priority of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance), a project of Education Development Center's Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), and supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For more information on the initiative go to: <http://zerosuicide.sprc.org>. For information on training options go to: <http://zerosuicide.sprc.org/resources/suicide-care-training-options>. (Offered by SPRC.)

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). A workshop designed for caregivers of individuals at risk of suicide. Training dates and locations are provided on the website. Also online are a text and audiovisual overview of the workshop, research and evaluations on the program, and suicide awareness facts. For more information go to: <http://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist>. (Offered by LivingWorks.)

Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk: Core Competencies for Mental Health Professionals. A one-day workshop for mental health professionals and employee assistance professionals that focuses on competencies that are core to assessing and managing suicide risk. For more information go to <http://www.sprc.org/training-events/amsr> or contact the AMSR staff at amsr@edc.org. (Offered by SPRC.)

Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS). CAMS is a therapeutic framework for suicide-specific assessment and treatment of a patient's suicidal risk. It is a flexible approach that can be used across theoretical orientations and disciplines for a wide range of suicidal patients across treatment settings and different treatment modalities. Online training, practical role-play training, presentations, and consultation services are available. For more information go to: <https://cams-care.com>. (Offered by CAMS-care.)

QPRT: Suicide Risk Assessment and Management Training. (QPRT stands for Question/Persuade/Refer/Treat.) A 10-hour course available either online or face-to-face for professionals who may evaluate, assist, counsel or treat potentially suicidal persons – a tool that is uniquely designed to gather critical information about a person's status at intake and to establish a safety and intervention plan. For more information to go <http://www.qprinstitute.com>. (Offered by QPR Institute.)

Recognizing and Responding to Suicide Risk: Essential Skills for Clinicians. A two-day advanced interactive training augmented by pre-workshop, web-based assessment and post workshop mentoring. For more information go to www.suicidology.org/training-accreditation/rrsr or contact Paul at the American Association of Suicidology, prothenberg@suicidology.org. (Offered by American Association of Suicidology.)

SafeTALK. SafeTALK is a half-day training program that teaches participants to recognize and engage persons who might be having thoughts of suicide and to connect them with community resources trained in suicide intervention. SafeTALK stresses safety while challenging taboos that inhibit open talk about suicide. For more information go to: <http://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk/> (Offered by LivingWorks.)