



Suicide Postvention in Farming and Agricultural Workplaces

Agriculture is more than a job. It's a demanding way of life that can significantly impact mental health. Agricultural producers, ranchers, farmworkers, and their families often face unique stressors that can contribute to emotional distress, depression, anxiety, and suicide risk.

Workplace suicide prevention and intervention efforts are essential, but deaths by suicide can still occur. It is important to have a plan in place for responding. This tip sheet provides concrete steps that workplaces can take to be prepared in the event of a death by suicide. Keep in mind that response plans will be different in different workplace settings, such as industrial settings and family farms.

Postvention¹

Postvention is an organized response in the aftermath of a suicide to accomplish any one or more of the following:

- To facilitate the healing of individuals from the grief and distress of suicide loss.
- To mitigate other negative effects of exposure to suicide.
- To prevent suicide among people who are at high risk after exposure to suicide.



Planning for Postvention

Plan ahead:

- Develop a plan and protocols in advance to enable your workplace to respond quickly and compassionately in the crisis period after a suicide death.²
- Be prepared to respond to the immediate emotional needs of people affected by the suicide death as well as to the long-term effects and risks that may be associated with exposure to a suicide.²
- Educate and build relationships among managers who will interact with bereaved people to enable a coordinated workplace response rather than fragmented services. Train managers on appropriate workplace resources that will be available to those who are grieving.²
- Consider adopting the Active Postvention Model, in which trained volunteer teams reach out to provide support and resources to survivors as soon after a suicide death as possible. It differs from the traditional (passive) model of postvention in which survivors only get help if they seek it themselves.² Critical incident management, including group debrief huddles, can help provide a path forward, provide hope, and start the recovery process.³

Follow your plan:

- Provide training to managers and trusted co-workers who will serve as a response committee. The committee should try to meet people who are grieving the suicide death where they are.
- Remember that people grieve differently and check in on co-workers and staff. Charge managers with providing appropriate accommodations for employees who may be struggling with grief. Ensure that employees are aware of the resources that are available to them, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Remember that postvention is an ongoing process. Be sure to check back in with employees in the weeks and months following the loss of an employee to suicide.

Resource: [Provide for Immediate and Long-Term Postvention](#) (Suicide Prevention Resource Center)



Supporting Workers After a Suicide Loss

- **Consider the needs of the family.** Before speaking publicly, reach out to the deceased worker's family and ask what support they may need before discussing how or what they may want to disclose publicly. Listen to their needs and respect their choices. In tightly knit agricultural communities, respecting the family's wishes is a critical first step to prevent harmful rumors, respect legal privacy rights, and protect community wellness.
- **Provide immediate support.** Utilizing trusted resources and community-based faith leaders helps lower barriers for workers who might otherwise avoid traditional mental health support due to stigma.⁵
- **Maintain routine with flexibility.** Agriculture requires ongoing daily operations because livestock and crops cannot wait. Managers can balance these rigorous operational demands by shifting schedules or coordinating with regional networks to bring in temporary relief workers. This can help reduce cognitive overload and secondary accident risks for the grieving crew.
- **Highlight the complexity of death by suicide.** Suicide is not the result of a single factor or event. It is complex and involves multiple events and contributing factors.
- **Use careful language when discussing the individual who died by suicide.** To prevent contagion, focus conversations on the person's life rather than the method of death. Avoid judgments, such as portraying the individual as selfish. Instead, promote help-seeking by sharing local, state, and national resources, such as the 988 Lifeline.
- **Ensure postvention activities are person-centered and trauma-informed.** A suicide death can be traumatic for individuals, families, coworkers, and communities. Grief is experienced differently by each person, and the impacts of a suicide death can continue over time, so be sure that support is ongoing.

Resource: [A Manager's Guidebook to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace: 10 Action Steps for Dealing With the Aftermath of a Suicide](#) (Action Alliance)



Immediate Crisis Support

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- Call or text 988 (Available 24/7, free, and confidential)
- Spanish speakers can press 2, or text “AYUDA” to 988

The Crisis Text Line

- Text: “HOME” to 741741

National and Regional Resource Centers

AgrAbility

Assists farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or severe injuries to safely continue farming.

American Farm Bureau

Federation: Farm State of Mind

A comprehensive directory of crisis lines, therapy resources, and peer insights by state.

Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN)

A regional USDA network connecting agricultural workers to local stress assistance programs.

Rural Minds

Dedicated to serving rural areas with mental health information, confronting stigma, and supplying actionable resources.



References

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2. Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (n.d.). *Provide for immediate and long-term postvention*. <https://sprc.org/effective-prevention/a-comprehensive-approach-to-suicide-prevention/provide-for-immediate-and-long-term-postvention/>
3. VandePol, B., & Beyer, C. (2019). *Leading a company in the aftermath of a suicide loss*. Construction Financial Management Association. <https://cfma.org/articles/leading-a-company-in-the-aftermath-of-a-suicide-loss>
4. Carson J. Spencer Foundation, Crisis Care Network, & National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. (2013). *A manager's guide to suicide postvention in the workplace: 10 action steps for dealing with the aftermath of suicide*. <https://theactionalliance.org/sites/default/files/managers-guidebook-to-suicide-postvention-web.pdf>
5. Farm Aid. (2018, March 28). *Why farmers face unique threats from stress*. <https://www.farmaid.org/issues/family-farm-movement/why-farmers-face-unique-threats-from-stress/>

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