

## After a Suicide

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Steps to take after a suicide:

- ◇Notify Supervisors
- ◇Start Serious Incident Report (SIR)
- ◇Notify CID (442-8804)
- ◇Notify Behavioral Health (442-4833)
- ◇Arrange for EAP Assistance (442-6289)



## Suicide Postventions

Recognizing the unique challenges in grieving the loss of a loved one from suicide.

Reaching out to intentionally draw survivors into the fabric of the community's normal activities. Deliberate inclusiveness is an important antidote to the inappropriate stigma that so often accompanies a death due to suicide. The faith community should be an important source of love and grace for the grieving.

Supporting them with the same gestures of kindness that are extended to others who have deaths in the family (taking them meals, etc.).

Talking with the survivors about the deceased in the same sensitive way they would about any other person who had recently died. This openness will help the surviving family overcome any embarrassment or shame they may be feeling.

Encouraging them to seek specialized support in their grieving process, either through support groups for survivors of suicide or by seeking professional grief counseling with a therapist experienced with suicide survivors.

## After an Attempt/Gesture

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Steps to take for a attempt or gesture:

- ◇Render First Aid
- ◇Call 911
- ◇DO NOT Leave Employee Alone
- ◇Remove all Harmful Objects
- ◇Notify Supervisors
- ◇Start Serious Incident Report (SIR)
- ◇Notify Behavioral Health (442-4833)
- ◇Arrange for EAP Assistance (442-6306)



**Suicide corrodes agency readiness, devastates employee morale, and causes profound and often lifelong suffering and guilt for the families, friends, and leaders of the suicide victim. Leaders can help decrease the number of suicides by stressing suicide prevention.**

# Army Civilian Leaders Suicide Prevention Tool



The Suicide Prevention  
Program at the  
Well-Being Center  
BLDG 3415 Miner Rd.

442-4205/1618

For Suicidal Behaviors,  
Call

1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Suicide is a significant cause of death among Americans, and government personnel are not exempt from the problem. Though there are differences in suicide rates based on such factors as age, gender, and ethnicity, a person from any background can commit suicide, or go through a period of seriously contemplating it.

People considering suicide often have been "worn down" by many stresses and problems. Actual or expected loss, especially a love relationship, is often a contributing factor. The suicidal person is frequently lonely and without a solid support system. Sometimes this is a long-term characteristic of the person; in other cases a geographic move, death, or a divorce may deprive an individual of personal ties that were formerly supportive.

Listen carefully to what your employees say -- people thinking about suicide often give hints about their intentions. Talking about not being present in the future, giving away prized possessions, and making funeral plans are examples of possible hints of suicidal intent. If you hear such talk, question it, kindly but firmly. You won't make the situation worse by clarifying it, and an open conversation with you may be the person's first step toward getting well.

Be alert to changes in behavior. A deterioration in job performance, personal appearance, punctuality, or other habits can be a sign of many problems, including suicidal concerns.

### Definitions

1.

**SUICIDAL IDEATION** - Suicidal ideation is the threshold event for command intervention. Often, the pre-suicidal person may express thoughts of either dying or killing him/herself. This type of behavior warrants immediate intervention.

2.

**SUICIDAL GESTURE** - A suicidal gesture is a self-destructive act which the perpetrator does not wish to result in death. Unfortunately, the suicidal gesture may result in death if the means are sufficiently lethal.

3.

**SUICIDE ATTEMPT** - A suicide attempt is a self-destructive act which the perpetrator wishes to result in death.

You'll want to get your employee to professional help, and the way you do this is very important.

The way you approach the issue can have an impact on the employee's willingness to receive professional help.

Your respect and concern for the employee can contribute to the healing process.

- First offer your own personal concern and support. Let the person know you care -- the employee is both a unique human being and a valued member of your team.
- Show understanding of the employee's pain and despair, but offer hope that, with appropriate help, solutions can be found for the problems that are leading the person to feel so desperate.
- Ask whether any of the employee's problems are work related, and, if so, take initiative in attacking those problems. For example, the employee may feel improperly trained for key responsibilities, or may be having difficulties with leave or some similar issue without having made you aware of it. If you can act as an advocate in remedying some of these problems, you will help in three ways -- removing one source of pain, showing concretely that someone cares, and offering hope that other problems can also be solved.
- Do not question the employee about personal problems, as the individual may wish to keep them out of the workplace, but listen with empathy if the employee chooses to share them.
- Do not offer advice, but acknowledge that the problems are real and painful.
- Protect the employee's privacy with regard to other employees. This will require thought and planning, as questions are sure to arise. When dealing with higher management, you need to think clearly about what they actually need to know,  
  
e.g., that the employee is temporarily working a reduced schedule on medical advice -- as opposed to what they don't need to know, e.g., intimate personal information that the employee may have confided in you as the immediate supervisor.
- Without hovering over the employee, show your continued support and interest. Make it clear that the individual is an important part of the team, and plays a key role in mission accomplishment.

As a general rule, anyone feeling enough pain to be considering suicide should be referred to a mental health professional, at least for evaluation. Make it clear that you want the employee to get the best possible help, and that some types of assistance are outside your own area of competence.

Usually, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is the referral source for mental health assistance. If the employee consents, call the EAP yourself, emphasizing that the situation is serious and needs timely attention.

- If for some reason the EAP is not immediately available, reach out to Behavioral Health at 442-4833, or, with the employee's permission, take them to the emergency room at Southwestern Medical Center.
- Should there appear to be immediate danger, do not hesitate to call 911.

### Follow Up

Once your employee is involved in a treatment program, try to stay in touch with the program. This does **not** mean that you should involve yourself with specific personal problems that the employee is discussing with a therapist. What you do need to know, however, is how you can work with the treatment program and not at cross purposes to it.

*Does the employee need to adjust work hours to participate in therapy?*

*Has the employee been prescribed medications whose side effects could affect job performance?*

*Should you challenge the employee as you normally do, or temporarily reassign the person to less demanding duties?*

Mental health professionals will not, for ethical reasons, release information without the employee's consent. If you make it clear to the employee and treatment team what your goals are--to support them, not to delve into the employee's private concerns--you will probably have no difficulty getting cooperation.

With the employee's consent, the EAP counselor can often play a coordinating role between the employees' health care provider and you as the supervisor. A meeting involving you, the employee, and the EAP counselor can be particularly helpful in clarifying relevant issues and assuring that your supervisory approach is consistent with the employee's treatment.