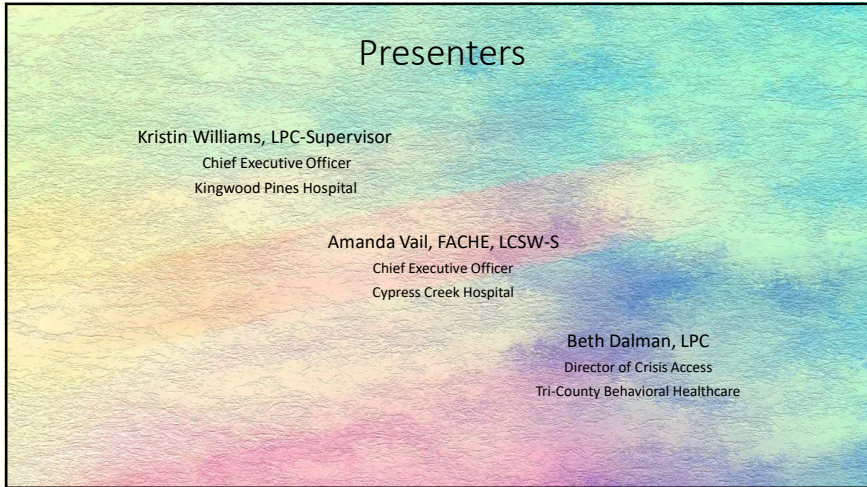


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2

A mental health crisis occurs when:

- Any time a person’s circumstances overwhelm their ability to cope
- an individual is experiencing suicidal or homicidal thoughts or;
- feel they may be a danger to themselves or others due to auditory or visual hallucinations or delusional thoughts or;
- they are unable to tend to their own basic care because of a **mental health** condition.

CRISIS!
WHAT CRISIS?


3

Are Our Youth at Risk?

The suicide rate for youth in foster care in Texas is three times higher than that of the general youth population in Texas Report on Suicide and Suicide Prevention in Texas 2022 Update

4

Risk Factors of Suicide for DFPS Youth



- A prior suicide attempt**
- Knowing someone who died by suicide, particularly a family member, friend, peer, or hero
- Access to lethal means**
- History of childhood trauma, including neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse or assault
- A history of being bullied
- A mental health diagnosis, particularly depressive disorders and other mood disorders

Texas Administrative Code, §749.103

5

Risk Factors of Suicide for DFPS Youth




- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Social isolation**
- Severe or prolonged stress
- Chronic physical pain or illness
- Loss of a family member
- The ending of a relationship
- LGBTQ Youth

Texas Administrative Code, §749.103

6

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE



- Talking about wanting to die or to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Being preoccupied with death in conversation, writing, or drawing
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- A change in personality
- Giving away belongings
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Having aggressive or hostile behavior
- Neglecting personal appearance
- Running away from home or a residential placement
- Risk-taking behavior, such as reckless driving or being sexually promiscuous.

Texas Administrative Code, §749.103


7

PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF SUICIDE

WHEN THERE IS

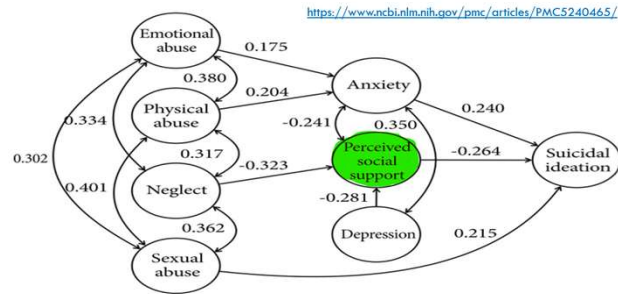
- Effective behavioral health care
- Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions
- Supportive relationships with caregivers
- Problem-solving skills, coping skills, and ability to adapt to change
- Self-esteem or sense of purpose
- Cultural or personal beliefs that discourage suicide.

YOU CAN FIND BALANCE



8

It's All About the Supports



9

The Assessment Process

Goals of the Assessment:

- Prompt assessment and evaluation
- Stabilization in the least restrictive environment
- Crisis resolution
- Linkage to appropriate services
- Reduction of inpatient and law enforcement interventions
- Divert from jails and emergency rooms

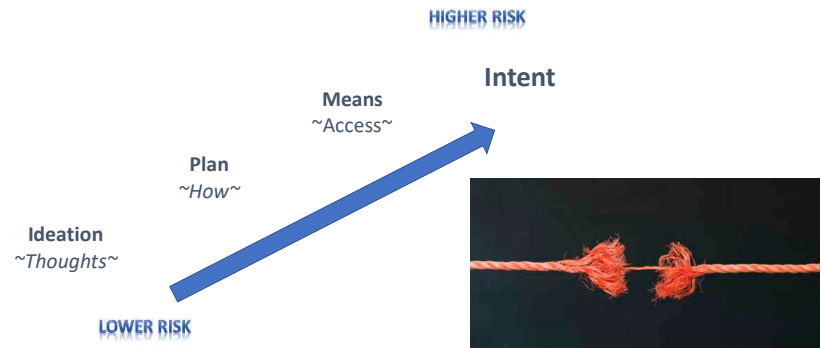
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Assessments for Youth & Adolescents

- ✓ History of events from parents, siblings, school staff, caregivers, probation officers, CPS, CASA, law enforcement, etc. Every effort should be made while still maintaining confidentiality
- ✓ Review past records if available
- ✓ Assess for possible medical conditions or history
- ✓ Assess substance use and abuse, quantity, and frequency
- ✓ Assess willingness of youth to receive treatment
- ✓ Assess social, environmental, or cultural factors
- ✓ Assess for possible trauma, abuse, or neglect

11

ASSESSING RISK LEVEL



12

Suicide Methods

In 2021, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for a little more than half (55%) of all suicide deaths.



13

Reducing Risk

- **Reduce Risk for People with Mental Illness or Addiction**
 - Of completed suicides "85% to 95% had likely been experience psychiatric illness that may or may not been recognized and treated and which likely contributed to the death."
 - Seek mental health care if needed.
- **Increase Social Connectedness**
 - "...loneliness and social isolation present major risks for premature mortality compared with other risk factors..."
 - Social isolation is one of the main risk factors associated with suicidal outcomes.
- **Reduce Access to Lethal Means**
 - Not just guns, although they are included, but reduce access "...based on the populations' leading suicide methods..."
- **Address Increases in Alcohol Consumption and Drug Overdose**
 - "During COVID-19 period...18% increase in drug overdose deaths have been documented in the U.S. ..."

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2772135>
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30445391/>

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Social Media

It's important to recognize when patterns of social media use are unhelpful and understand the potential consequences.

- **Learning People Skills** - If the majority of your interactions with others are coming through a screen or in written messages...it may be difficult to improve your people skills through face-to-face communication.
- **Online Bullying** - When this bullying behavior happens on social media, it is generally viewed and even shared widely — making it difficult to reduce its impact.
- **Comparing Ourselves To Others** - Constantly viewing idealized depictions can lead to feeling competitive and/or unhappy if we try to compare ourselves to these images that may not be realistic.
- **Isolation** - Research has shown that people who spend more time on social media and less time in personal interactions with others have an increased risk of feeling **anxious and depressed** ...too much time online and too little time with others can have a negative impact on our mental health.

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Teens/Social-Media-and-Mental-Health>

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YOU CAN HELP!

Encourage the suicidal person to identify other people in their life who can also help.

- Always ask about access to firearms!
- Help him/her identify a safe place, safe people, and supports.
- Coping skills, activities, distractions
- Help them identify their warning signs
- Follow up plan: who, when, where, & why
- Reasons to live!
- Refer to professionals when needed!



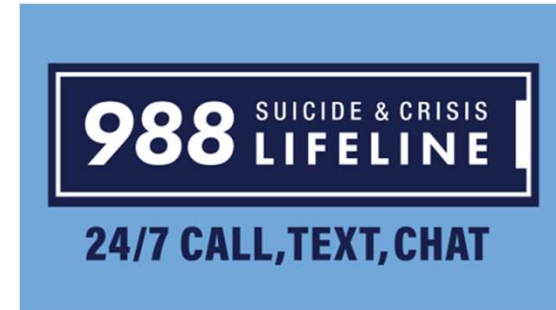
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Prevention is Key



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When In Doubt, Call



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What can you do, when you hear suicidal language or suspect someone is suicidal

ask?
ask about suicide
to save a life

Take the following 3 steps:

- 1. ASK About suicide. Get the conversation started.**
- 2. Seek More Information. Be genuine and keep safe!**
- 3. Know Where and How to Refer. Be direct in a non-confrontational way. (Take action!)**

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Additional References

- Coming Together to Care; Mental Health America 2012
- Samaritans Beyond Surviving;
<http://www.samaritansbeyondsurviving.org>
- Texas Suicide Fact Sheet: Hispanic Americans; Mental Health America of Texas
- ASK: TexasSuicidePrevention.org or MHATexas.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) afsp.org

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