

Caring for Older Adults

Aging Service Providers

- Train aging service providers to identify warning signs and how to refer to appropriate services
- Introduce depression and suicide screening in the course of non-clinical activity
- Provide outreach and support older adults in improving life conditions and addressing issues that can reduce stress

Responding After a Suicide Death

- Make grief counseling available
- Support at-risk older persons individually and/or in groups
- Refer or transport to a suicide loss survivor support group (visit spanidaho.org to find a group in your region)
- Check in with loss survivors at later times after the death, including on the anniversary of the death



Means Matter—What You Can Do.

Restricting access to lethal means of suicide saves lives. The idea of method substitution, (i.e., they will just find another way) is generally untrue. The suicidal brain thinks in extremely narrow terms so anything done to restrict access to a person's methods can make a difference. If deadly methods are not readily available when a person decides to attempt suicide, it can allow time for an intervention, the possibility of later deciding not to attempt suicide, or using less deadly methods, allowing for a greater possibility of medical rescue. Safe storage of firearms can decrease the number of suicides. Lock and store ammunition separately from firearms. Remove guns from homes with those who are at risk for suicide. Keep medications and household toxins locked up. Older adults who attempt suicide are more likely to use more lethal means and die from their suicide attempt than younger people who attempt suicide.

Much of this information has been adapted from: The Suicide Prevention Resource Center and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Visit their websites at: www.sprc.org and www.samhsa.gov

If you, or someone you know, is in crisis or emotional distress, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or 1-208-398-HELP (4357).



Local Resources

Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline
idahosuicideprevention.org
208-398-HELP (4357)

SPAN Idaho
spanidaho.org
208-860-1703

Suicide Prevention Program
spp.dhw.idaho.gov
208-334-4953

Idaho Careline
211.idaho.gov
2-1-1



Suicide Prevention Program
Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
Division of Public Health
450 West State Street, 4th Floor
PO Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0036
Phone: 208-334-4953
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Prevent Suicide Among Older Idahoans



Suicide is preventable.

Caregivers can make a difference.

Older adults spend more time with family caretakers and senior community and assisted living personnel than with other professionals. Caretakers are in a good position to be suicide prevention gatekeepers and save lives! If you are a caregiver, be willing to talk about suicide. Talking about suicide or suicidal thoughts will not push someone to kill him- or herself. Let them know that suicide is not the answer to whatever they are going through.

Risk Factors

There are several important risk factors for suicide in older adults. These include:

- Depression
- Prior suicide attempts
- Marked feelings of hopelessness
- Medical conditions that significantly limit functioning or life expectancy
- Pain coupled with or declining role and loss of independence or sense of purpose
- Social isolation
- Family discord or losses, e.g., recent death of a loved one
- Inflexible personality or marked difficulty adapting to change
- Access to lethal means

- Alcohol or medication misuse or abuse
- Impulsivity due to cognitive impairment

Other behaviors may also indicate a serious risk—especially if the behavior is new; has increased; and/or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change:

- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
 - Talking about being a burden to others
 - Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
 - Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
 - Having nightmares
 - Sleeping too little or too much
 - Withdrawing or feeling isolated
 - Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
 - Displaying extreme mood swings
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Learn to Recognize the Warning Signs

Knowing the risk factors and warning signs for suicide can save a life as most suicidal people demonstrate warning signs listed here. By learning the warning signs, paying attention and trusting your own judgment, you can be the difference between life and death.

Warnings Signs

Some behaviors may indicate that a person is at immediate risk for suicide. These three warning signs should prompt you to take action right away:

- **Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself**
 - **Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or obtaining a gun**
 - **Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live**
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Remember

Any one of the warning signs alone doesn't necessarily indicate a person is suicidal. However, all signs are reasons for concern, and several signals may be cause for concern of suicide. Warning signs are especially important if the person has attempted suicide in the past.



Caring for Yourself

A Note to Older Idahoans: Your emotional well-being is affected by your health.

If you are acting as caretaker and you need help or support, make sure to discuss this with your doctor, a friend or a family member. Here are some suggestions to take care of your own health:

- Make an appointment with a medical provider if you are in pain or have a physical illness.
 - Seek treatment or talk to a counselor if you have depression or another mental health issue, or if you drink too much or abuse medications.
 - Join a support group to help you cope with any loss of family or friends, financial problems, or other personal issues.
 - Stay active and exercise regularly. Try taking a group class or going for walks.
 - Eat a healthy diet. Avoid too much sugar, salt, fat and caffeine.
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**Call/Text 208-398-HELP (4357) or
Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**