

Prevent Suicide – What You Know Could Save a Life

Suicide can be challenging to talk about yet its impact is so devastating that we need to start the conversation. Losing one life to suicide is devastating and the ripple effect can be seen throughout our communities. What you know could save a life. What do you know and what do you need to know about suicide? Suicide can be prevented if people are aware of the warning signs and know what to do if someone is suicidal. Health professionals, friends and family members play a significant role in the prevention of suicide. People tend to have a better understanding of how to prevent physical illness or injury than how to prevent emotional or mental health problems. Educating yourself about the warning signs and where to get help is key to suicide prevention.

Western Health partners with community members and other organizations to support public education opportunities and suicide prevention initiatives. For example, Western Health partners with the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Committee, a sub-committee of Community Mental Health Initiative formed in 2010, which includes members from other community organizations and individuals whose lives have been affected by suicide. In an effort to raise awareness, educate the community, reduce stigma and to remember those we have lost, the Suicide Prevention and Awareness Committee has been very active in organizing an annual World Suicide Prevention Day Walk on September 10th, a Tree of Memories in memory of lives lost to suicide, various presentations, and distribution of warning signs pocket cards, “life savers”, key chains and post cards throughout the Western region. Most recently, the Committee created a local video with hopes to send a powerful message to viewers about suicide. Western Health also supports the various training programs that are available to educate people about mental health, mental illness and suicide prevention. Programs such as Mental Health First Aid, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Tattered Teddies and Straight Talk are programs that are available in the Western region.

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Mood changes or extreme changes in attitudes and ideas (lasts more than 2 weeks and affects daily functioning)
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, purposelessness and guilt
- Withdrawal from family, friends and interests
- Loss of interest in usual activities or daily routines
- Change in eating, sleeping, personal appearance or lack of self-care
- Increase in drug and alcohol use or risk taking behaviour
- Giving away personal possessions; telling final wishes and/or making plans for death
- Looking for ways to die (ex.: pills, weapons, or other means)
- Writing or talking about death, dying or suicide or an expressed intent to die by suicide (ex: “I wish I was dead”)

What to do if someone is Suicidal

Suicide prevention starts with a question. Are you ready to ask? If you suspect someone may be suicidal, **ASK - CARE - CONNECT**. **Ask** if they have thoughts of suicide. If yes, ask if they have a plan (how, when, how prepared) and if any prior attempts. They should not be left alone. **Care** - Let the person know you care and want to help. Be a good listener. Talk in a calm, caring, accepting and non-judgmental way. Be sensitive! Do not blame, criticize or interrupt. **Connect** - Encourage and support them to get help professional help. Don't promise that you won't tell anyone - *threats of suicide should always be taken seriously*. Contact your local Emergency Department or Police.

Where to Get Help

If you feel suicidal, tell someone and get professional help immediately!

Mental Health Crisis Line	1-888-737-4668
NL Health Line	1-888-729-2929
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868
Local Emergency or Local Police	

Mental Health and Addiction Services:

Corner Brook	634-4506/4171
Stephenville	643-8740
Port aux Basques	695-6250
Burgeo	886-1550
Deer Lake	635-7830
Norris Point	458-2381
Port Saunders	861-9125

Western Health distributes resources such as Warning Signs Post Cards, Crisis Line Magnets, Support After Suicide Cards, and After a Suicide Personal Guide for Survivors to help educate the public about suicide. For more information on programs and resources, contact Tara Welsh, Regional Mental Health Promotion Consultant at 634-4927 or visit www.westernhealth.nl.ca or www.suicideprevention.ca.

*Submitted by:
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