

Suicide Assessment

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This workshop will provide an overview of suicide assessment in the United States, local experience in suicide prevention and emergency services in Findlay Ohio and then provide participants a model for suicide and lethality assessment utilizing the Ohio Department of Mental Health Lethality Assessment.

Warning signs of acute risk include: threatening to hurt or kill self; talk of wanting to kill or hurt self; looking for ways to harm self by seeking access to firearms, pills or other means, talking or writing about death, suicide or dying when these actions are out of the ordinary. Other signs include hopelessness, increased substance use, sense of no purpose in life, anxiety or agitation, feeling trapped, withdrawing from friends, family and society, acting reckless, rage or uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge, and dramatic mood changes. Family attempts of family suicide completions also greatly increase the risk that a person will attempt suicide. The importance of obtaining collateral information when and where available will be discussed along with strategies for sorting that information.

Clinician safety will be discussed. Suicidal clients are frequently quite volatile and interviewing them in the least stressful environment with little stimuli is the most appropriate choice. Strategies for accomplishing this in a busy emergency room or police station will be discussed along with steps all clinicians can take to keep themselves and their clients safer from harm. Examples will be shared from presenters' experience and elicited from the audience.

Recent trends in suicide attempts and completions will be discussed, strategies for prevention and intervention, and support for families and friends affected by a loved ones suicide will be addressed. Hospitalization has been the standard of care for patients who are suicidal, but this is becoming more and more difficult as funding sources are increasingly restricting this option. Crisis residential facilities are available in some counties but there is frequently greater need than there are beds available. Safety contracts will be discussed along with strategies for engaging a wider community in the care for suicidal clients. Finally outreach to families and friends that have experienced a suicide will be discussed and presented.

Target audience is beginning and intermediate clinicians, volunteers. This workshop will meet the requirement for annual training on suicide assessment and intervention required by some states for emergency health officers.