

Suicide

Prevention Assessment

1. Praise the service user:

- "I'm here to follow up on your answers to the suicide risk questions. These can be tough to talk about, but it helps us understand your needs. Thank you for sharing, it helps us plan to keep you safe. I need to ask a few more questions."

2. Assess the service user:

- Review earlier responses. Talk to the service user alone; ask any visitors to leave the room.

Frequency of suicidal thoughts:

Find out if and how often the service user has suicidal thoughts. Ask: "In the past few weeks, have you thought about ending your life?" If yes, ask: "How often?" (once or twice a day, several times a day, a couple times a week, etc.) "When was the last time you had these thoughts?"

Current suicidal thoughts:

"Are you thinking about ending your life right now?" (If yes, the service user needs urgent mental health help and cannot be left alone. A positive response means imminent risk.)

Past behaviour:

Check for past self-injury and suicide attempts. Ask: "Have you ever tried to hurt yourself?" "Have you ever tried to end your life?" If yes, ask: "How? When? Why?" and assess intent: "Did you think [method] would end your life?" "Did you want to die?" (For youth, intent is as important as the method's danger.) Ask: "Did you have, are having, or due to have, any treatment or support?"

Suicide plan:

Ask if the service user has a suicide plan, regardless of their other answers. Ask: "Do you have a plan to end your life? Please describe." If no plan, ask: "If you were going to end your life, how would you do it?"



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Symptoms:

- Depression: "In the past few weeks, have you felt so unhappy or depressed that it makes it hard to do things you want to do, or stops you from doing anything at all?"
- Anxiety: "In the past few weeks, have you felt so worried that it makes it hard to do things you want to do or makes you feel constantly agitated or overwhelmed?"
- Impulsivity/Recklessness: "Do you often act without thinking?"
- Hopelessness: "In the past few weeks, have you felt hopeless, like things would never get better?"
- Isolation: "Have you been withdrawing from others or not going out?"
- Irritability: "In the past few weeks, have you been feeling more irritable or angrier than usual?"
- Substance and alcohol use: "In the past few weeks, have you used drugs or alcohol?" If yes, ask: "What? How much?"
- Other concerns: "Recently, have there been any concerning changes in how you are thinking or feeling? Any changes in your body?"

Social Support & Stressors:

- Support network: "Is there a trusted person/carer/relative you can talk to? Who? Have you ever seen a therapist/counselor?" If yes, ask: "When and for what purpose?"
- Safety question: "Do you think you need and want help to keep yourself safe?" (A "no" response does not mean the service user is safe, but a "yes" means immediate action is needed to ensure safety.)
- Reasons for living: "Can you share some of the reasons you would not end your life?"

1. Determine next steps:

- After the assessment, choose the appropriate plan.
- Create a safety plan for managing potential future suicidal thoughts and discuss securing or removing potentially dangerous items (medications, , ropes, etc.)
- **Check service user feels ready and safe to leave:**
 - Ensure the service user understands the information provided, has someone to talk to and support. Advise the service user that if these thoughts arise again, how to seek support.

Provide resources to all service users.

This document is adapted from ASPIRES Pathway Clinician Resource
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Download the StayAlive app.

Please use the QR code to connect with downloadable resources that may be helpful to a service user.

