

Southeastern Pennsylvania **24/7 Crisis Centers**

Berks County
SAM, Inc. 877-236-4600

Bucks County
**Lenape Valley
Foundation** 800-499-7455

Chester County
**Valley Creek
Crisis Center** 877-918-2100

Delaware County
MVP Recovery 855-687-2410

Montgomery County
**Montgomery
County Emergency
Service** 610-279-6100

Philadelphia County

Northeast 215-831-2600

North 215-951-8300

**Center City &
South** 215-829-5433

West 215-748-9000

**Philadelphia
Crisis Line** 215-685-6440

Protective Factors

A protective factor is a characteristic or attribute that reduces the likelihood of attempting or completing suicide. They enhance resilience and help to counterbalance risk factors.

These are some things felt to deter suicidal thoughts and behaviors that you may be able to develop or enhance:

- Believing in the value of life
- Having reasons for living
- Strong social connections and supports
- Hope for the future and an optimistic outlook on life
- Spiritual beliefs against suicide
- Managing anger and impulsivity
- Living in a positive setting
- Sobriety or limited use of alcohol
- Feelings of personal control
- Sense of self-worth and self-esteem
- Willingness to get help

High Risk Older Adults

- Men aged 75 and older
- Elderly women with psychiatric histories
- Those living alone or in long-term care
- Elders with self-injury backgrounds
- Retirees from high-risk occupations

This information is for educational purposes only. This information does not take the place of advice or help from qualified behavioral health or mental health professionals.



Older Adults and Suicide: What to Know

**Montgomery County
Emergency Service**

50 Beech Drive
Norristown, PA 19403

610-279-6100

www.mces.org

Purpose of this information

This brochure offers basic information about suicide risk in older adults. It is intended for those who care for and care about elders. ***Suicide is preventable at every age and is always a premature death that leaves behind loved ones and others to cope with traumatic loss.***

How does suicide happen?

A suicide may occur when both a strong **intent** to die and the **capability** for potentially lethal self-harm **come together**.

A desire to die may result from a person's *belief* that they are a burden to those close to them or that everyone would be better off without them.

A capability for lethal self-harm may result from personal or job-related trauma, exposure to abuse or violence, pain, access to firearms or other weapons, military training, and many other experiences.

Elder suicides are rising in Pennsylvania. They are likely to continue to rise significantly as the high-risk "baby boomer" generation ages.

What are **possible triggers** for thoughts of suicide?

- Interpersonal issues
- Separation
- Financial loss, exploitation, or insecurity
- Loss of autonomy, self-care, or dignity
- Death of a spouse or other loved one
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Worsening chronic illness or disability

What are **warning signs** of suicide?

Warning signs are behaviors that may **indicate** a person is **experiencing thoughts of suicide** and may be thinking of **harming themselves**.

- Talking about being trapped and experiencing a loss of control
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- An increase in anxiety, agitation, or sleep problems
- Mood changes such as
 - Increasing anger
 - Growing pessimism
 - Unnecessary risk-taking
- Growing self-criticism
- All or nothing, black and white thinking

What are **danger signs** of suicide?

- Indifference to support or care regimens
- Giving away cherished or favored items
- Making final arrangements
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares

How can I get **help** for suicide **warning signs**?

- **Clearly and directly ask about suicidal intent** - *Are you thinking of taking your life?*
- **Call one of the crisis hotlines** on the back panel of this brochure as soon as possible for support
- **Physically stay with the person** or have someone else do so
- If being with the person physically is not feasible, **maintain contact** with the person as much as possible
- **Do not believe that the person will get help on their own** if they suddenly say that they will be alright or are feeling better
- **Remove guns** or other means to harm oneself mentioned **only if it is safe to do so**

When should I get **emergency help**?

You should reach out for immediate help if an elder is:

- Voicing or otherwise communicating to others that clear thoughts of suicide are present
- Working out a specific suicide plan with when and how they would harm themselves
- Seeking out a way to harm themselves

Any one of the above signals immediate danger, and you must:

- Call your local crisis center immediately
- Go to the nearest hospital emergency department immediately
- or, if the above are not possible or available, dial 911 immediately