

What do I do about warning signs?

Reach out to the crisis hotline for the county that your loved one is located in, which can be found on the next panel of this handout, as soon as possible.

- Avoid leaving the person alone
- Discourage use of alcohol or drugs
- Try to get your loved one away from anything that they may harm themselves with **if it is safe to do so**

When do I get emergency help?

Seek immediate help if your loved one is:

- Voicing, emailing, or texting that they are thinking about suicide
- Working out a specific suicide plan with when and how
- Seeking a way to harm themselves or others (i.e. pills, gun, knives, etc)

Any one of these behaviors or signs signals the individual is at **very high risk of harming themselves**.

- Call your local crisis center or crisis hotline
- Ask if your loved one will go to the nearest emergency department immediately to speak with someone
- **If above is not feasible or safe, dial 911 for immediate emergency response.**

Questions? Call us **24/7**.
610-279-6100

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

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



Suicide Risk After Discharge

What Family Members Need to Know

Montgomery County Emergency Service

50 Beech Drive
Norristown, PA 19403
610-279-6100
www.mces.org

Post-Discharge Suicide Risk

The weeks after an inpatient psychiatric hospital stay are a period of **very high suicide risk** for persons living with serious mental illness.

Most recently hospitalized individuals do not have thoughts of suicide, but it is **imperative for family members to know what to look for and know what to do if they expect their loved one is experiencing thoughts of suicide.**

Suicide risk may come from several sources:

- Facing overwhelming stressors again
- Not adhering to treatment plans
- Using alcohol or other substances
- Loss of around-the-clock structure, supervision, and support given by hospital treatment staff

Strong suicide risk occurs when a compelling intent to die and the capability for lethal self-harm come together. The desire for the individual to die may lift or subside during hospitalization, but the capability for lethal self-harm remains after discharge.

Past attempts, abuse, and trauma create a risk baseline. Your loved one feeling as though they are a burden to others adds to this risk.



Before Discharge

Before discharge, as a part of Montgomery County Emergency Service's treatment program, every patient should:

- Be assessed for suicide risk
- Know suicide risk warning signs
- Have a personal safety plan
- Know what to do if they find themselves feeling suicidal
- Have information on crisis services within their community.

Warning Signs

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

Warning signs of suicide risk include:

- Feeling trapped or as if they are losing control
- Looking for ways to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Increase in alcohol or other substance use
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- Anxiety, agitation, or sleep problems
- Mood changes
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Black and white thinking (i.e. all or nothing)
- Giving away meaningful, prized, or favored items
- Making final arrangements
- Suddenly happier and calmer, especially after a period of sadness

For more information about suicide prevention, visit www.asfp.org

Protective Factors for Suicide

Similar to risk factors, a range of factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels can protect people from suicide. These are called 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. They can include:

- Believing in the innate value of life
- Having reasons for living
- Strong social connections and support
- Having a strong sense of cultural identity
- Having hope for the future and an optimistic outlook
- Spiritual beliefs against suicide
- Managing anger and impulsivity effectively
- Sobriety
- Feeling of personal control
- Sense of self-worth and self-esteem
- A willingness to get help

For those individuals receiving mental health care, following their treatment plan by keeping appointments with their therapist, psychiatrist, and/or other care providers and taking their medications as prescribed may block or help in reducing the onset or reoccurrence of suicidal thoughts.

