Suicide Prevention
Overview
Suicide Risk Factors

• Mental health disorders, in particular:
  o Depression or bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder
  o Alcohol or substance use disorder or dependence
  o Schizophrenia
  o Post traumatic stress disorder
  o Borderline or antisocial personality disorder
  o Conduct disorder (in youth)
  o Psychotic disorders and/or symptoms
  o Anxiety disorders
  o Impulsivity and aggression
Suicide Risk Factors

• Previous suicide attempt
• Family history of attempted or completed suicide
• Serious medical condition and/or pain
• The large majority of people with mental health disorders or other suicide risk factors do not engage in suicidal behavior
Environmental Factors

• Some people with major risk factors can be at increased risk due to environmental factors
  o A highly-stressful life event
  o Prolonged stress due to adversities
  o Exposure to another person’s suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide
  o Access to lethal methods of suicide
Factors that Lower Risk

- Receiving effective mental health care
- Positive connections to family, peers, community, and social institutions such as marriage and religion that foster resilience
- Skills and ability to solve problems
Suicide Risk by Gender

• Seventh leading cause of death for males and fifteenth leading cause for females (2007 data)
• Four times as many males as females died by suicide
• Firearms, suffocation and poison were the most common methods of suicide
• Males were more likely to use firearms
• Females were more likely to use poison
Suicide Risk by Gender

- Five times as many males as females ages 15 to 19 died by suicide
- Six times as many males as females ages 20 to 24 died by suicide
Suicide Risk by Age

- Older Americans are disproportionately likely to die by suicide
  - 14.3 of every 100,000 people ages 65 and older died by suicide in 2007 compared to 11.3 in the general population
  - 47 of every 100,000 non-Hispanic white men 85 or older died by suicide
Level of Suicide Risk

• Low: Some suicidal thoughts, no plan; says he or she won't complete suicide

• Moderate: Suicidal thoughts, vague plan not very lethal; says he or she won't complete suicide

• High: Suicidal thoughts, specific lethal plan; says he or she won't complete suicide

• Severe: Suicidal thoughts, specific lethal plan; says he or she will complete suicide
Warning Signs

• Talking about wanting to kill themselves or saying they wish they were dead

• Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as hoarding medicine or buying a gun

• Talking about a specific suicide plan

• Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live

• Feeling trapped or desperate, or needing to escape from an intolerable situation
Warning Signs

- Having the feeling of being a burden to others
- Feeling humiliated
- Having intense anxiety and/or panic attacks
- Losing interest in things, or losing the ability to experience pleasure
- Insomnia
- Acting irritable or agitated
Warning Signs

• Becoming socially isolated and withdrawn from friends, family and others

• Showing rage, or talking about seeking revenge for being victimized or rejected
Common Misconceptions

• People who talk about suicide won't really do it
• Anyone who tries to complete suicide must be “crazy”
• If a person is determined to complete suicide nothing is going to stop them
• People who complete suicide were unwilling to seek help
• Talking about suicide may give someone the idea to act on it
Helping a Suicidal Person

• Mental Health First Aid
  o Assess for risk of suicide or harm
  o Listen nonjudgmentally
  o Give reassurance and information
  o Encourage appropriate professional help
  o Encourage self-help and other support strategies
Helping a Suicidal Person

• Get professional help
• Follow-up on treatment
• Be proactive
• Encourage positive lifestyle changes
• Make a safety plan
• Remove potential means of suicide
• Continue your support over the long haul
When Talking to a Suicidal Person

DO:

• Be yourself
• Listen
• Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm and accepting
• Offer hope
• Ask if the person is having thoughts of suicide
When Talking to a Suicidal Person

DO NOT:

• Argue with the suicidal person
• Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong
• Promise confidentiality
• Offer ways to fix their problems, give advice, or make them justify their suicidal feelings
• Blame yourself
Telephone Resources

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  (800) 273-8255
  TTY – hearing and speech impaired
  (800) 799-4TTY or (800) 799-4889

• Alliance Health Access and Information Center
  (800) 510-9132