

SUICIDE INTERVENTION PROTOCOL

Any mention of suicide must be addressed.

Initial Steps:

- If you are unsure whether the person is considering harm to himself, discuss the issue of suicide matter-of-factly with the person. Use the following questions.
 - “Have you attempted suicide before? When? What were the events surrounding the attempt?”
 - “Have you had recent thoughts of suicide?”
 - “Tell me about those thoughts.”
 - “Do you have a plan?”
 - “What method would you use to carry out your plan?”
 - “Do you have access to such method?”

Asking these questions will not facilitate suicide. On the contrary, it will take the power and mystique out of the suicidal thoughts. Many people will say they have thought of suicide but have no intention of carrying out such action.

- If you believe there is no threat of harm, then it is time to encourage the person in the Word. It is important to give him assurances that in Jesus there is hope for the difficulties he is experiencing.
- Communicate that some of the feelings the counselee is experiencing may be normal for the situation at hand.
- Begin discussing options or alternatives to suicide in the situation at hand.
- Use the person’s internal boundaries to block suicidal thinking or action.
 - “I might go to hell.”
 - “There would be no one left to care for my family.”
 - “It would devastate my spouse.”
 - “I might be left an invalid.”
 - “It might be painful to die.”

If you have a probable belief that the person is in immediate danger of harming himself:

- Do not leave person or let him leave. Contact your oversight if possible. If suicide is imminent, take him to Northwest Texas Hospital for evaluation or have police take the person. Take someone else with you if possible. Tell the person the following:

“Suicide is against the law. I believe you are in danger of harming yourself. You have left me with only two options. The first is that you allow me to take you to Northwest Texas Hospital for a mental assessment. If you refuse, the only other option I have is to call the police and have them escort you to Northwest Texas Hospital.”
- If committed to the hospital, the counselee will go to the Pavilion. Visit from a pastoral perspective once a day if possible.
 - Let your oversight know about what has happened as soon as possible.
- Walk with the person pastorally for aftercare, but encourage them to continue with a professional counselor.

What to do if you are ministering to a potential suicidal person on the phone:

- Try to keep the person engaged on the phone. Find out their name, address, and phone number, or where they are calling from.
- If you believe that suicide is eminent, try to call the police or 911 on another line and ask them to check on the person.
- Try to get a verbal commitment that the person will not take any action until you meet with him personally.
- Give the person a contact number to get in touch with you or the suicide hotline at 359-6699 until such time you meet with him, and try to secure a commitment that the person will call before taking any action.
- Follow above protocol for ministering in person.