

MENTAL HEALTH and SUICIDE PREVENTION

SB 460



What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common but [help is available](#). People with mental health problems can get better and many [recover](#) completely.

Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Learn more about [specific mental health problems](#) and [where to find help](#).

Mental Health and Wellness

Positive mental health allows people to:

- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Connecting with others
- Staying positive
- Getting physically active
- Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

What To Look For

People can experience different types of mental health problems. These problems can affect your thinking, mood, and behavior. Click the links below for additional information on each disorder.

[Anxiety Disorders](#)

People with anxiety disorders respond to certain objects or situations with fear and dread. Anxiety disorders can include obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorders, and phobias.

[Behavioral Disorders](#)

Behavioral disorders involve a pattern of disruptive behaviors in children that last for at least 6 months and cause problems in school, at home and in social situations. Examples of behavioral disorders include Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Conduct Disorder, and Oppositional-Defiant Disorder (ODD).

[Eating Disorders](#)

Eating disorders involve extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors involving weight and food. Eating disorders can include anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.

[Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders](#)

Mental health problems and substance abuse disorders sometimes occur together.

Mood Disorders

Mood disorders involve persistent feelings of sadness or periods of feeling overly happy, or fluctuating between extreme happiness and extreme sadness. Mood disorders can include depression, bipolar disorder, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and self-harm.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

If you have OCD, you have repeated, upsetting thoughts called obsessions. You do the same thing over and over again to try to make the thoughts go away. Those repeated actions are called compulsions.

Personality Disorders

People with personality disorders have extreme and inflexible personality traits that are distressing to the person and may cause problems in work, school, or social relationships. Personality disorders can include antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder.

Psychotic Disorders

People with psychotic disorders experience a range of symptoms, including hallucinations and delusions. An example of a psychotic disorder is schizophrenia.

Suicidal Behavior

Suicide causes immeasurable pain, suffering, and loss to individuals, families, and communities nationwide.

Trauma and Stress Related Disorders

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur after living through or seeing a traumatic event, such as war, a hurricane, rape, physical abuse or a bad accident. PTSD makes you feel stressed and afraid after the danger is over.

Educators are often the first to notice mental health problems. To find out about mental health problems, what you can do, and how to develop effective strategies to meet the mental health needs of your students, click this link: [For Educators**](#)**

SUICIDE PREVENTION





Texas Suicide Prevention Council
Texas Youth Suicide Prevention Project



Risk Factors for Suicide

Risk factors may be thought of as leading to or being associated with suicide; that is, people “possessing” the risk factor are at greater potential for suicidal behavior. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Injury Center, these factors are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family history of suicide ▪ History of mental disorders, particularly clinical depression ▪ Impulsive or aggressive tendencies ▪ Isolation, a feeling of being cut off from other people ▪ Physical illness ▪ Family history of child maltreatment ▪ Previous suicide attempt(s) ▪ History of alcohol and substance abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings of hopelessness ▪ Cultural and religious beliefs (e.g., belief that suicide is noble resolution of a personal dilemma) ▪ Local clusters of suicide ▪ Barriers to accessing mental health treatment ▪ Loss (relational, social, work, or financial) ▪ Easy access to lethal methods ▪ Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse disorders or to suicidal thoughts
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“IS PATH WARM?” helps to identify key warning signs associated with suicide. These warning signs are critical, as they manifest differently in different people. It is important to remember that not all warning signs are verbal and it is often a combination of indicators that are present; *if observed, seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) for a referral.*

- I Ideation (threatening to hurt themselves, talking, writing about death)
- S Substance Abuse (increased substance use)

- P Purposelessness (perception of no reason for living, no sense of purpose)
- A Anxiety (agitation, unable to sleep or sleep extraordinary amount so time)
- T Trapped (feeling like there’s no way out of their situation)
- H Hopelessness (no sense/perception the future will be better)

- W Withdrawal (from friends, family, work and society in general)
- A Anger (uncontrollable rage/anger, seeking revenge)
- R Recklessness (engaging in risky behavior, activities, seemingly without thought)
- M Mood Changes (dramatic, unpredictable mood changes)

A second resource, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practice Registry contains two levels of warning signs, high risk and chronic/ongoing risk. Both sets of warning signs should trigger action by the observer by *contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) for a referral.*

High Risk (activity in the following areas):

Threatening to hurt or kill oneself

Talking of wanting to hurt or kill oneself

Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, drugs (prescription or illicit) or other means

Talking, writing or posting on social media about death, dying and suicide

Chronic/Ongoing Risk: feelings and behavior that is experienced over an extended period of time. The five key feelings and behaviors are:

What to Do if You Spot the Signs

Ask directly. Asking someone directly if they ever think of suicide lets them know that you take the situation seriously and want to help. It may be a real relief to someone to know that it's all right to talk about it openly.

Evaluate whether the danger is imminent. If someone admits thinking about suicide, follow through by asking questions that can help you determine how high the risk is. Find out if he or she has thought about how and when to do it and if the means are available. If there is a plan—WHAT, WHEN, and HOW—the risk of suicide is very high.

Consider the San Francisco Suicide Prevention Risk Assessment tool: "P.L.A.I.D.P.A.L.S. PlaidPals is a checklist of things to watch for when assessing the potential risk of suicide:

- P | Plan – Do they have one?
- L | Lethality – Is it lethal? Can they die?
- A | Availability – Do they have the means to carry it out?
- I | Illness – Do they have a mental or physical illness?
- D | Depression – Chronic or specific incident(s)?

- P | Previous attempts – How many? How recent?
- A | Alone – Are they alone? Do they have a support system? Are they alone right now?
- L | Loss – Have they suffered a loss? (Death, job, relationship, self-esteem?)
- S | Substance abuse (or use) – Drugs, alcohol, medicine? Current? Chronic?

ACTIONS (what to do if you spot the warning signs):

If the threat is imminent:

- ✓ Call 911 for a mental health deputy or officer to assist in transportation.
- ✓ Transport the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- ✓ Contact your local Mental Health or Behavioral Health Center. These are listed in [Chapter 3](#) of this toolkit. Many have a local mobile outreach team to assist in these circumstances.
- ✓ Get an agreement to get help from a mental health professional.
- ✓ Call for help; contact the national crisis line at 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) to be connected to your local crisis center.
- ✓ Call your local crisis hotline, which can be found at: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa-crisishotline/>

There are also crisis lines for specific needs, such as:

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline number for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and for those with speech disabilities who use a TTY 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender Youth Suicide Hotline (866) 4-U-TREVOR
Military and Veterans Suicide Hotline (800) 273-8255 (Press 1)	Suicide Hotline in Spanish (800) 273-8255 (Press 2)

If you feel suicidal or you need to help someone else who does, call for help immediately.

On the Phone:

Call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** to be connected to a suicide and crisis center in your area. The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** is the only national suicide prevention and intervention telephone resource funded by the federal government. The Lifeline provides immediate assistance to individuals in suicidal crisis by connecting them to the nearest available suicide prevention and mental health service provider through a 24-hour, toll-free telephone number **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

V hotline: 1-800-273-8255 +1. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

- ① Call the local crisis center listed in the first few pages of your local phone directory.
- ① Call 911 and ask for the mental health crisis team of your local law enforcement agency.
- ① Call or go to the nearest hospital emergency room in your area.
- ① Call one of the Texas crisis centers listed in the [Chapter 3](#) of this toolkit.
- ① Call your doctor or other health care provider for a referral to someone who provides suicide prevention and intervention services.

Information to share

Find Help Online at:

- <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa-crisishotline/> The Texas Council of Community Centers has a list of Texas crisis lines supported by local mental health authorities on a county-by-county basis.
- <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhservices/default.shtm> The Texas Department of State Health Services, Mental Health and Substance Abuse division maintains an easy to use listing of local mental health authorities and their 24/7 crisis lines. You are able to search by county, city or zip code to find the one nearest you.
- www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org The National Suicide Prevention lifeline website will provide you with further information about using their 24/7 hotline.

For Smartphone Users:

Please take a minute to download the free **ASK & Prevent Suicide app** for your smartphone. With this app, you will always have a list of crisis hotlines and local health centers at your fingertips, as well as crucial information that will help you identify the warning signs of suicide, ask the difficult questions, and take the necessary steps to save a life.

Versions of this app are available for all mobile web browsers, including iOS and Android. For iPhone users, go to: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ask-prevent-suicide/id419595716?mt=> to download this app from the iTunes store, or visit users, you can also find a version of this app at Google Play (<https://play.google.com/store?hl=en>), or in the Android Market from your phone at: <market://details?id=com.mhatexas.askaboutsuiicide>.