

# UW GATEKEEPERS SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

## FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE RISK FACTORS and WARNING SIGNS

**Know the Risk Factors:** Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that someone will consider, attempt, or die by suicide. They cannot cause or predict a suicide attempt, but they are of importance to be aware.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and certain personality disorders</li><li>• Alcohol and other substance use disorders</li><li>• Hopelessness</li><li>• Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies</li><li>• History of trauma or abuse</li><li>• Major physical illnesses</li><li>• Previous suicide attempt(s)</li><li>• Family history of suicide</li><li>• Job or financial loss</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of relationship(s)</li><li>• Easy access to lethal means</li><li>• Local clusters of suicide</li><li>• Lack of social support and sense of isolation</li><li>• Stigma associated with asking for help</li><li>• Lack of healthcare, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment</li><li>• Cultural and religious beliefs, such as the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma</li><li>• Exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media and Internet)</li></ul>
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**Know the Warning Signs:** Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change.

1. Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
2. Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun
3. Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
4. Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
5. Talking about being a burden to others
6. Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
7. Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
8. Sleeping too little or too much
9. Withdrawing or isolating themselves
10. Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
11. Extreme mood swings

## **Special Population Considerations:**

### **Gender and Sexual Minorities (GSM)**

Gender and sexual minorities (GSM) are at a higher risk for victimization, discrimination, and emotional distress. (Williams, Frey, Stage, & Cerel, 2018)

GSM face unique stressors that contribute to adverse mental health outcomes, such as family and interpersonal rejection, ostracism, and isolation, internalization of negative cultural/social attitudes (internalized homophobia). (Williams, Frey, Stage, & Cerel, 2018)

Sexual minority youth are persistently at a higher risk for suicidal behavior. (Peter, T., Edkins, T., Watson, R., Adjei, J., Homma, Y., & Saewyc, E. (2017))

### **Veteran Suicide**

Soldiers have a higher risk of suicide if other suicide attempts have occurred in their unit. (Ursano, et al., 2017)

Veterans with TBI were 25 percent more likely to attempt suicide than those without TBI. (Fonda, et al., 2017)

### **Indigenous people**

Colonialism is responsible for much of the trauma experienced by Indigenous people all over the world, and its effects continue to this day. (Linklater, 2014; Haskell & Randell, 2009)

The traditional ways of living that fostered resiliency in Indigenous communities were almost entirely abolished by colonialism. (Linklater, 2014; Haskell & Randell, 2009)

Unwillingness to seek help because of stigma related to mental health, substance abuse disorders, or suicidal thoughts. (Indian Health Service, 2017)

Isolation on reservations, feeling cut off from other people. (Indian Health Service, 2017)