



Help to protect employees from the risk of suicide

If you think someone you work with may be at risk of suicide, or has attempted suicide, it can be hard to know how to respond and support them. Many people are unsure what to say, or how to approach the situation.

While everyone's experience is different, there are a number of simple, positive things you can do. By knowing what to look for, and having the skills and confidence to have a conversation and provide support, you can make a huge difference to someone at risk. Showing concern and helping the person feel connected and valued can lessen the likelihood of a suicide attempt.

Work can play a significant part in recovery for someone who has attempted suicide or is at risk – providing structure, a sense of purpose and social interaction. As a manager or employer you have an important role in ensuring an employee who has attempted suicide is supported to return to work, and that the process is as safe and smooth as possible for everyone involved.

It can be very difficult to understand why someone has reached the point where they are considering ending their life. People who contemplate suicide are experiencing intense emotional pain and may view suicide as a way to end this pain. The pain they are feeling may be due to any number of experiences or circumstances. Negative life events can sometimes act as triggers for suicidal thoughts or behaviour.

We don't fully understand suicidal behaviour, and there are normally a number of factors to consider. For more information visit beyondblue.org.au/suicide-myths-and-facts

Signs people may be at risk of suicide

While people at risk of suicide may try to hide how they are feeling, they often give out warning signs. You might notice changes in their behaviour or be aware of events in their life that could be affecting them.

Signs to look for include:

- previous suicide attempt/s
- talking about suicide
- talking about being a burden to others
- talking about feeling trapped or having unbearable pain
- agitation, anxiety and/or irritability
- trouble sleeping
- changes in appearance
- taking time off work
- a recent stressful event or loss
- social withdrawal/feeling alienated
- seeming preoccupied with an internal thought or problem.

Act immediately if you notice any warning signs or if another team member comes to you with concerns about a colleague.

If you feel out of your depth, consider asking the person if you can contact someone else who could assist. A colleague who has been trained in suicide first aid may be better placed to offer support, or you could help the person to call a crisis line, such as Lifeline – 13 11 14 or others listed at the back of this fact sheet.





Speaking with someone you are concerned about

If you're concerned that someone you manage may be suicidal, start by having a conversation. You might feel unsure about what to say, but the main thing is to be calm and non-judgmental.

You don't need to solve their problems or understand 'why' – just listen and encourage them to seek support or check in with their health professional.

Don't be afraid to ask directly if they are thinking of suicide. Asking the question does not increase the person's risk, but their response will help you understand how they're feeling.

If someone in your team tells you they've thought about or attempted suicide, you may be shocked or find it hard to understand, but your role is to provide reassurance and offer support.

Be aware of how difficult the conversation is likely to be for them. Talking about suicide takes courage – acknowledge this and thank the person for being honest with you.

Resources to help you have a safe, effective conversation about suicide are listed at the back of this fact sheet.

For more guidance on having a conversation visit beyondblue.org.au/talk-about-suicide

How the Suicide Call Back Service can help

Suicide Call Back Service offers immediate crisis support to anyone in Australia aged 15 years and older.

They can support anyone affected by suicide, including:

- anyone who is feeling suicidal
- anyone who is worried about someone
- anyone who is caring for someone who is feeling suicidal
- anyone who has lost someone to suicide
- health professionals supporting people who are affected by suicide.

People may be eligible to receive up to six free telephone counselling sessions, scheduled at times to best suit their needs.

Help if you think there is an immediate risk

If someone at work is in crisis and you think that they are at risk of immediate harm, call emergency services (triple zero – 000) or take them to your local hospital emergency department.

Suicide Call Back Service can provide additional support. Suicide Call Back Service is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide service that provides free telephone, video and online counselling.

Visit suicidecallbackservice.org.au/phone-and-online-counselling. Their professionally trained counsellors can help you if you are concerned about someone.

You can call from anywhere, anytime, on **1300 659 467** to discuss your concerns.

Supporting someone who has attempted suicide

A person returning to work after a suicide attempt is likely to feel isolated and alone. They may also feel ashamed or embarrassed.

Any genuine care and concern you can offer will help the person feel connected and can lower the risk of another suicide attempt. Include them in meetings and social events or ask their opinion on work issues – anything to make them feel like a valued member of the team.

Keep in touch with the employee on a regular basis to see how they are – whether they are taking time off or have returned to work.

Beyond Blue's The Way Back Support Service resources provide practical guidance and support for people who have attempted suicide, and those close to them. For more, visit beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/the-way-back-support-service



Suicide prevention in your workplace

It's important to implement broad strategies that include suicide prevention in your workplace. Think about what measures already exist in your workplace that contribute to preventing suicide. You can get advice on suicide prevention and how to introduce an approach that suits your workplace from the organisations listed under 'Suicide prevention training' at the end of this fact sheet.

Key steps include:

- make information about available support resources readily available
- establish policies and procedures for supporting someone who may be at risk of suicide, has attempted suicide or is bereaved by suicide
- make emergency contact numbers readily available to all staff
- train key staff in suicide first aid and let all employees know who they can talk to
- provide access to a phone and privacy to allow people to call a suicide crisis line if required
- provide education and training for all employees
- encourage and demonstrate help-seeking as a manager, when you personally have mental health issues.

Regardless of the policies and procedures your organisation has in place, everyone can help to reduce stigma by speaking openly about suicide in the workplace.

Suicide can seem like a scary subject and it's OK to feel uncomfortable. Individually, you can make a huge difference to someone at risk by being supportive and showing concern – you may even save their life. With the right processes, members of your whole organisation can also play a part.

Developing a Return to Work Plan for someone who has attempted suicide

A structured approach to returning to work is essential, and any plan should be a collaborative effort between the employee and manager.

Start by setting realistic goals and objectives, as well as a process for monitoring their progress and fine-tuning the plan.

Visit headsup.org.au/help-others-stay-at-work

Making adjustments to support a returning worker

By law, employers must make changes to the workplace to enable someone who has had mental health issues to remain at or return to work – providing they can continue to meet the core requirements of their role.

These changes, or 'reasonable adjustments', can be temporary or permanent and are likely to be part of the Return to Work Plan.

Visit headsup.org.au/help-others-stay-at-work

General information

Black Dog clinical resources

blackdoginstitute.org.au

The Black Dog Institute was founded in 2002 and aims to improve the lives of people affected by mental illness, through the translation of research into improved clinical treatments, increased accessibility to mental health services and delivery of long-term public health solutions.

Life in Mind resources

lifeinmindaustralia.com.au

Life in Mind is a national initiative that connects Australian suicide prevention services and programs to each other and the community. It provides a platform for knowledge exchange surrounding suicide prevention, as well as sector leadership through collaboration and engagement.

Having a conversation about suicide

beyondblue.org.au/talk-about-suicide

Mental Health First Aid Suicide Guidelines 2014

mhfa.com.au/sites/default/files/mhfa-guidelines-suicide-revised-2014.pdf

Community guidelines for responding to suicidal behaviour

conversationsmatter.com.au

Practical online resource to support safe and effective community discussions about suicide.

Suicide prevention training

livingworks.com.au

Suicide awareness training programs to improve understanding and help people intervene to support a colleague at risk.

[1300 738 382](tel:1300738382)

Mental Health First Aid

mhfa.com.au

Courses teach mental health first aid strategies to members of the public. The training equips participants to support someone developing a mental health problem, or experiencing a mental health-related crisis, until appropriate professional treatment is received, or the crisis resolves.

Crisis lines and further support

Lifeline

lifeline.org.au

Free, confidential, 24-hour telephone and online crisis support service. The website also provides a range of information.

[13 11 14](tel:131114)

Suicide Call Back Service

suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Free, confidential, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for people who are suicidal and anyone wanting to talk through concerns. The website also provides a range of information and resources.

[1300 659 467](tel:1300659467)

MensLine Australia

mensline.org.au

A telephone and online counselling service for men with family and relationship concerns.

[1300 789 978](tel:1300789978)

Beyond Blue

beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information, advice and brief counselling, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

[1300 22 4636](tel:1300224636)

Email or chat to us online at beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

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[@beyondblue](https://www.twitter.com/beyondblue)

[@beyondblueofficial](https://www.instagram.com/beyondblueofficial)

[company/beyondblue](https://www.linkedin.com/company/beyondblue)