

SMDHU

SUICIDE TRIAGE

GUIDELINE & ALGORITHM

WHY A SUICIDE TRIAGE GUIDELINE AND ALGORITHM?

- Staff requesting guidance on how to manage situations
- A task group was established to develop a guideline to support staff providing services in client homes, reception areas, local offices and via phone & email.
- The task group (Clinical Services, Healthy Living, Family Health, Leadership Designates and Program Foundations and Finance) established the Suicide Triage Guideline and Suicide Triage Algorithm.

ALGORITHM VS. GUIDELINE

- The Suicide Triage **Guideline** is to be utilized by staff that have academic knowledge, skill and competencies specific to mental health.
- The Guideline applies to **RNs, RPNs, PHNs, Physicians, and Customer Service Representatives.**
- The Suicide Triage **Algorithm** will guide **all other staff** in ensuring appropriate referral services are provided to clients utilizing suicidal language.

Suicide Triage Algorithm

This algorithm is for any staff faced with a situation where a client is using suicidal language. The client contact may either be in person or over the phone. Clients who are in crisis may be suicidal. A crisis occurs when a person is confronted with a critical incident or stressful event that is perceived as overwhelming despite the use of traditional problem-solving and coping strategies.

First Responder

Client expressing thoughts of suicide and/or using suicidal language

Remain calm, establish rapport and let client know that you are concerned for their well being.

Simcoe County Youth (≤18 years)

Simcoe County Residents >18 years
Muskoka Residents

Inform client that you will connect them to a mental health service provider who can offer more assistance.

For in-person client interactions: Call Youth Crisis Service 705-728-5044 and stay on the line until a staff answers. Let Youth Crisis Service staff know you are with a youth who is potentially suicidal then let client speak directly to Youth Crisis Service staff.

For phone client interactions: Inform client you will transfer their call to Youth Crisis Service by making a conference call. Let them know they will be placed on hold while you do so. Make conference call to Youth Crisis Service (705-728-5044) and let Youth Crisis Service staff know you have a youth on the phone who is potentially suicidal then conference client in. Disconnect from call once contact between crisis staff and client has been made.

Is the first responder a nurse

yes

no

Utilize judgment in determining best action from the options of:

- > Accessing a nurse in the office to speak with client.
- > Connecting client to Health Connection Core nurses by making a warm transfer to the Crisis VDN 8644 (explain to Health Connection you are transferring a client and provide as many details as possible including client's identity, phone number and location if known).
- > Connecting client to the appropriate Mental Health Crisis Line:
 - Simcoe Mental Health Crisis Line – Tel: 1-888-893-8333 or (705) 728-5044
 - Muskoka Crisis Line: 1-800-461-5424
 - Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600
 - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Youth Line: 1-800-268-9688
 - Drug & Alcohol Helpline: 1-800-565-8603
 - Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- > Call 911 yourself or have a co-worker do as appropriate
- > Utilize SMDHU Panic Alarm

Notify your supervisor as soon as possible after you have triaged the client

Suggestions for building rapport.

You sound very upset.

I appreciate how difficult this situation must be for you. I'd like to help.

May I ask what your name is and where you are calling from?

Would you like me to connect to someone who can help?

Suicide Algorithm Wallet Cards



Simcoe County Youth ≤ 18 years

In-person youth interactions:

Call Youth Crisis Service 705-728-5044 (or 1-888-893-8333).

Let Youth Crisis Service staff know you are with a youth who is potentially suicidal then let youth speak directly to Youth Crisis Service staff.

Phone youth interactions:

Inform youth you will transfer their call to Youth Crisis Service by making a conference call. Let youth know they will be placed on hold.

Make conference call to Youth Crisis Service 705-728-5044 (or 1-888-893-8333). and let staff know you have a potentially suicidal youth on the phone, then conference client in.

Simcoe County Residents >18, Muskoka Residents

Use judgment to determine best action:

- 1 Access a nurse in the office to speak with client.
or
- 2 Connect client to Health Connection using the "call whisper" function to Crisis VDN line extension #.
(Explain to Health Connection you are transferring a client and provide as many details as possible, including client's identity, phone number and location if known.)
or
- 3 Connect client to most appropriate resource:
Simcoe Mental Health Crisis Line 1-888-893-8333
..... or 705-728-5044

Muskoka Crisis Line 1-888-893-8333
or
- 4 Call 911 or have a co-worker to do so for you.
or
- 5 Utilize SMDHU Panic Alarm.
- 6 Notify your supervisor as soon a possible after you have triaged the client.

Additional resources:

- Mental Health Helpline 1-866-531-2600
- Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line 1-800-268-9688
- Drug & Alcohol Helpline..... 1-800-565-8603
- Kids Help Phone..... 1-800-668-6868

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE FOR BOTH ALGORITHM AND GUIDELINE

The suicide triage guideline & algorithm ensures that any individual under the age of 18 and living in Simcoe County is referred to Youth Crisis Services as per Child Youth & Family Services Coalition of Simcoe County .

**Suicide Risk Protocol: A Coordinated Community
Response for Youth at High Risk for Suicide.**

1-888-893-8333

705-728-5044

EXAMPLE OF ALGORITHM FOR NON NURSES

14 year old client receiving Oral Health services expresses thoughts of suicide and/or uses suicidal language.

Remain calm, establish rapport and let client know that you are concerned for their well being.

As the individual is ≤ 18 years - Inform client that you will connect them to a youth mental health service provider who can offer more assistance.

Call Youth Crisis Service 705-728-5044 and stay on the line until a staff answers. Let Youth Crisis Service staff know you are **with a youth** using suicidal language - then let youth speak directly to Youth Crisis Service staff.

HEALTH CONNECTION – CRISIS VDN

- Staff who are not nurses can transfer client/member of the public to Health Connection Core nurses, if:
 - the client is agreeable to speaking to a nurse over the phone and or there is no nurse in the branch office who can assess the client
- Health Connect Crisis VDN 8644
 - Developed so staff who are not nurses can readily access Health Connection nurses.
 - Crisis lines enables the staff person working with the client/member of the public to provide Health Connection nurses with “a heads up”.

HOW TO CONFERENCE CALL FOR CRISIS SUPPORT FROM SMDHU PHONES

- a. While you have the caller live on the line, inform them that you are going to conference them to a crisis line or 911.
- b. With the caller live, push the conference button on phone (inform them they will be on hold briefly and will hear music).
- c. Enter desired telephone number e.g. Simcoe Mental Health Crisis Line 705-728-5044 or 1888-893-8333.
- d. Push conference button again and both the caller and community agency will be on the same phone line.
- e. Provide a brief explanation of the situation.
- f. Hang up phone to disconnect from the conference call (both parties will remain connected until one of them hangs up).

ALGORITHM FOR NON NURSES “IN PERSON”

The young mother of a young child comes into to the health unit looking for help. She states “ I find parenting so overwhelming. I have no money and sometimes I think my son would be better without me.”

Utilize judgment to determine best action from the options of:

- Accessing a nurse in the office to speak with client.
- Connecting client to Health Connection Core nurses utilizing the Crisis VDN 8644.
- Connect client to appropriate Mental Health Crisis Line.
- Call 911 yourself or have a co-worker do as appropriate.
- Utilize SMDHU Panic Alarm.
- Notify your supervisor as soon as possible after you have triaged the client.

Suicide Triage Guideline for Nurses



Title	Suicide Triage Guideline		
Revised/Reviewed		Number	
Approved		Pages	

Protocol	Guideline		
Staff to whom the protocol applies: (Select all those that apply from the following :)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Service Representative	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Home Visitor	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Promoter	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dental Hygienist	<input type="checkbox"/> Program Assistant/Receptionist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physician	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dentist	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Inspector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Registered Nurse	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dietitian/Nutritionist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Health Nurse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Registered Practical Nurse	

Key Assessment Questions: The assessment questions in this guideline are intended to assist staff in linking clients to the appropriate health care services/provider and are not intended to determine level of risk for suicide. The use of this guideline should never replace a thorough assessment by a qualified clinician (psychiatrist, mental health specialist). **If the individual is 18 year or younger and living in Simcoe County refer to [CYFSC Suicide Risk Protocol for Youth](#)**

1. Are you feeling hopeless about the present or your future?
2. Are you thinking about killing yourself?
3. Do you have a plan to take your life? **If yes ask:**
Have you decided how you will kill yourself?
4. Have you taken any steps to secure the things you would need to carry out your plan? **If yes ask:**
Have you taken/done anything already? If yes ask:
Are you at home now? If not at home ask:
Where are you now? (address, phone #)
5. Are you currently or have you ever received mental health care?
6. Have you attempted suicide before?
7. Have you been drinking alcohol or using drugs?

If the client answers yes to questions 2, 3, 4, or 6 they should be connected directly to the appropriate mental health crisis support line or 911. (See [Suicide Triage Algorithm](#).)

Mental Health Crisis Lines

Simcoe Mental Health Crisis Line – Tel: 1-888-893-8333 or (705)728-5044
 Muskoka Crisis Line – Tel: 1-800-461-5424
 Simcoe County Youth Crisis Service - Tel: 705-728-5044
 Mental Health Helpline – Tel: 1-866-531-2600
 Kids Help Phone – Tel: 1-800-668-6868
 Lesbian Gay Bisexual Youth Line – Tel: 1-800-268-9688

Interventions as per assessment:

Phone Interaction

1. Record the telephone number and name from call display in the event the client is disconnected. Calmly obtain and record the identifying information from the caller. Silently alert a second staff person, if available.
2. Establish if anyone is currently in the home with the client. Try to engage support of the other person as appropriate
3. Establish if there are children in the client's care and their ages.
4. Remain calm and establish rapport with the client letting them know that you are concerned for their well-

Suicide Guideline Wallet Cards

SUICIDE TRIAGE GUIDELINE (Nurse)

Are any warning signs present?

- ▶ Threatening to kill or harm self?
- ▶ Suicide plan in place?
- ▶ Seeking or access to available means e.g. pills, weapons?
- ▶ Previous suicide attempt?

If yes **▶** Link to mental health crisis line (see reverse)

- ▶ For in-person interactions, make call for client,
- ▶ For phone interactions, inform client that you are transferring their call to the crisis line by establishing a conference call, make the call. Under 18 go directly to the youth crisis line (see reverse),
or
- ▶ call 911.

If no **▶** Problem solve and develop action plan with client

- ▶ refer/link client with community resources/supports e.g. mental health services, doctor (see reverse).

SUICIDE TRIAGE GUIDELINE (Nurse)

Crisis Lines:

Simcoe Mental Health Crisis	1-888-893-8333
.....	or 705-728-5044
Simcoe Youth Crisis Service	705- 728-5044
.....	or 1-888-893-8333
Muskoka Crisis	1-888-893-8333

Additional resources:

Mental Health Helpline	1-866-531-2600
Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youthl Line	1-800-268-9688
Drug And Alcohol Helpline.....	1-800-565-8603
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868
Parents Helpline	1-888-603-9100

EXAMPLE OF GUIDELINE – “IN PERSON”

A high school student states to the nurse that her ex-boyfriend has posted mean and untrue things about her on Facebook . Student states “I’d be easier if I was dead”

Face to Face Interaction

- Remain calm and establish/maintain rapport with the client letting them know that you are concerned for their well-being.
- If at any time you feel that the client is going to imminently harm themselves, call 911.
- Assess situation - **Refer to key assessment questions on Guideline Card**
- Connect client with the appropriate help based on your assessment

EXAMPLE OF GUIDELINE – “PHONE”

A nurse is speaking with a client on the phone. The client is crying and states: “My current situation is hopeless – my life is ruined – why bother living”

Phone Interaction

1. Establish if anyone is in the home with the client.
2. Establish if there are children in the client’s care and their ages.
3. Remain calm and establish rapport with the client.
- 4. If at any time you feel that the client is going to imminently harm themselves, 911 should be called either by yourself or by a second staff person.**
5. Assess situation - **Refer to key assessment questions on nurse Guideline**
6. Connect client **using phone to the appropriate help/resource line** based on your assessment. You may need to connect the caller by conference call or have the second staff person make the call.

LOCATION OF SUICIDE TRIAGE GUIDELINE & ALGORITHM

- Intranet

- Agency

- **Customer Service**

(same location as Positive Spaces and Accessibility)