

Responding to a Staff Member in Suicidal Distress

1. Initial Contact

The initial contact from a person in the workplace who is in suicidal distress may be in person, by phone or by email and may be made to Human Resources (HR), management or a colleague.

When contact is made, it is important to do the following:

<p><i>DO...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remain calm and don't panic ✓ Take the mention of suicide seriously ✓ Remind yourself of how you dealt with a person in distress in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask the person to tell you what is wrong ✓ Ask the question 'are you suicidal?' ✓ Consider your intervention taking account of the particular situation
<p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Confidentiality can sometimes be sought from a person in suicidal distress about his/her suicidal intention. This might not be possible as it may be necessary to disclose the person's intention of suicide to ensure his/her safety. A judgment call will be required in this regard. Getting help for the person should, in so far as is practicable, be negotiated and agreed.</p>	

2. Consultation

When faced with this situation, you may decide to consult - if appropriate or if possible - with someone you trust for advice and support. There are a number of options available to you. Be mindful of the dignity of the distressed person when consulting with third parties.

- Senior Manager
- HR Division
- Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)
- A person who is ASIST trained in your organisation (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training – HSE)
- PeoplePoint in relation to next-of-kin details
- Next-of-kin
- An Garda Síochána
- GP/Hospital Accident and Emergency
- Chief Medical Officer (CMO)

3. Risk Assessment

Although it is not possible to predict suicide, there may be some indication that a person is considering taking their life. Bear in mind the following risk factors and warning signs. This list is not exhaustive.

<p>RISK FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide attempt or other act of self-harm • Expressing suicidal ideas/thoughts • Uncharacteristic language • Recent hospitalisation for suicidal ideation • Recent and major life changing events • Untreated mental health issues • Impulsive or risk-taking behaviour • History of substance abuse 	<p>WARNING SIGNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent unusual behaviour or mood change • Loss of interest in one's self/appearance • Social withdrawal and isolation • Distracted and less communicative • Emotionally withdrawn or distant • Emotional outbursts - tearful /angry • Deterioration in work performance • Friends/colleagues raising concerns
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4. Plan of Action

It is not possible to be prescriptive when responding to suicide risk as every situation is different. However, you can make a potential plan of action taking into account the above risk factors and warning signs.

Please remain calm and confident while also expressing your concern

Let the person know you must take a threat of suicide seriously – their safety is paramount

Ask the person to tell you what is wrong

Note all necessary details e.g. name, phone number, location etc.

Offer a listening ear and empathise as the person tells their story

Find someone you can speak to if you feel you need guidance or support

Assess the situation taking into account the risk factors and warning signs

Consider if the person is in immediate danger and in need of medical help

Talk through the different options for getting help e.g. family, GP, Hospital, etc.

Inform person about Services e.g. Samaritans - Tel: 116 123 or Pieta House - Tel: 1800 247 247

Offer to contact someone that can help

Now try and agree a way forward and decide on any necessary follow up

In responding to the person in suicidal distress, you may also find it helpful to refer to the CSEAS leaflets '**Information for those in Suicidal Distress**' and '**Information for those affected by Suicide**' available on the CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

5. Self-Care

Dealing with a person in suicidal distress can be both physically and emotionally exhausting. It is advisable to practice self-care in the following hours and days.

- Debrief with your manager as soon as you can
- If you have any concerns or worries, talk them over with your manager and/or with the CSEAS
- Keep a good structure and routine to your working day
- Maintain your usual work/life balance
- Your sleep may be disturbed but it should return to normal in a few days

Please remind yourself "I did my best in this situation taking into account the information and resources available to me at the time"