



Suicide Postvention Preparation Plan

Whether or not you have experienced the loss of a patient to suicide, it is important to create a suicide postvention preparation plan to help you navigate all facets of this complex and challenging loss. Having a well-developed plan in place will allow you to take immediate steps after a patient suicide to take care of yourself and your professional practice.

General Recommendations

- Create an electronic file/document or a physical copy of your plan. Whether it's an electronic document or a physical copy, make sure you can access the plan easily from both your home and your clinic.
- Organize your plan. Consider separating your plan into sections so that you can easily access the specific information and resources you need at each stage of the grieving process. Recommended sections to include in your plan are listed below.
- Be as specific as possible in your plan. Clearly lay out the steps you will take and how to access the resources you will need. This specificity and clarity will help you know what to do and who to reach out to after receiving notification about a patient suicide.
- The immediate aftermath of a suicide loss can be an emotionally charged time. Preparing your plan *prior* to a loss can help decrease the anxiety associated with having to quickly determine necessary action steps following a suicide, allowing you to focus on taking care of yourself personally and professionally.

Recommended Sections

- Insurance carrier information
 - The insurance company's 24-hour, emergency contact phone number
 - A copy of the actual insurance policy
- Clinical supervision
 - Clinical supervisor's name and emergency contact phone numbers (e.g., home, cell, office)
 - Secondary or backup supervisors' names and contact information
 - A supervision contract that specifies mutually agreed-upon goals and objectives for supervision in the case of a patient death by suicide
- Professional mentors and peers
 - Professional mentors and peers' names and phone numbers
- Personal counseling
 - Name and contact information of a personal counseling service
- Nonprofessional significant others
 - List of trusted friends and family members to contact for support
- A realistic self-statement related to patient suicide
 - A brief statement (5 sentences max) regarding patient suicide
 - Example: "Because I work with people who suffer unique forms of distress, and because some of my patients will be at-risk to [die by suicide], the odds are that someday one of my patients will [die by] this tragic act. This will occur despite my very best efforts and intentions."

Self-Care Strategies

- Make a schedule to ensure regular contact with at least one friend or family member for the first 30 days following the suicide
- Engage in physical activity
- Meditate or practice mindfulness
- Take care of yourself: take a shower every day, eat healthy, balanced meals, prioritize time for sleep, and drink plenty of water
- Schedule time for meaningful activities