



## Terminology Related to Suicide

The knowledge and use of appropriate terminology when dealing with issues related to suicide helps to reduce stigma associated with help seeking. Appropriate use of terminology by the healthcare team and those referring individuals for care promotes and facilitates appropriate and timely care of at-risk individuals and those affected by suicide and demonstrates respect and sensitivity to the experiences of those affected by suicide. The following terms are defined in reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Surgeon General and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.<sup>1,2</sup>

- **Affected by Suicide:** All those who may feel the impact of suicidal behaviors, including those bereaved by suicide, as well as community members and others
- **Bereaved by Suicide:** Family members, friends, and others affected by the suicide of a loved one (also referred to as survivors of suicide loss)
- **Means:** The instrument or object used to carry out a self-destructive act (e.g., chemicals, medications, illicit drugs)
- **Methods:** Actions or techniques that result in an individual inflicting self-directed injurious behavior (e.g., overdose)
- **Other Suicidal Behavior including Preparatory Acts:** Acts or preparation toward making a suicide attempt, but before potential for harm has begun. This can include anything beyond a verbalization or a thought, such as assembling a method (e.g., collecting pills) or preparing for one's death by suicide (e.g., writing a suicide note, giving things away)
- **Postvention:** Response to and care for individuals affected in the aftermath of a suicide attempt or suicide death
- **Protective Factors:** Factors that make it less likely that individuals will develop a disorder. Protective factors may encompass biological, psychological, or social factors in the individual, family, and environment
- **Resilience:** Capacities within a person that promote positive outcomes, such as mental health and well-being, and provide protection from factors that might otherwise place that person at risk for adverse health outcomes
- **Risk Factor:** Factors that make it more likely that individuals will develop a disorder. Risk factors may encompass biological, psychological, or social factors in the individual, family and environment
- **Suicidal Behaviors:** Behaviors related to suicide, including preparatory acts, as well as suicide attempts and deaths



- **Suicidal Ideation:** Thinking about, considering, or planning for suicide
- **Suicidal Plan:** A thought regarding a self-initiated action that facilitates self-harm behavior or a suicide attempt; often including an organized manner of engaging in suicidal behavior such as a description of a time frame and method
- **Suicide (die by suicide, death by suicide, suicide death):** Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior
- **Suicide Attempt:** A non-fatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury
- **Suicide Crisis: (suicide crisis, suicidal crisis, or potential suicide):** A situation in which a person is attempting to kill him or herself or is seriously contemplating or planning to do so. It is considered a medical emergency, requiring immediate suicide intervention and emergency medical treatment.

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. Self-directed Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements. <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/self-directed-violence-a.pdf>. Published February 2011. Accessed 22 May 2013.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Surgeon General and National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, Goals and Objectives for Action. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/national-strategy-suicide-prevention/full-report.pdf>. Published September 2012. Accessed 22 May 2013.