

A GUIDE TO PREVENTING SUICIDE IN THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS



Generalitat de Catalunya
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i Formació Especialitzada

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This Guide has been drawn up collaboratively between the Sub-Directorate General for Rehabilitation and Health Programmes under the Ministry of Justice, Rights and Memory and the Mental Health and Addictions Master Plan of the Directorate-General for Health Planning and Research, under the Ministry of Health, as part of the activities envisaged by the 2021-2025 Plan for Suicide Prevention in Catalonia, the Penitentiary Health Programme devised by the Catalan Institute of Health (ICS) and the Centre for Legal Studies and Specialised Training (CEJFE).

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EDITOR: © **Generalitat de Catalunya. Centre d'Estudis Jurídics i Formació Especialitzada**

First Edition: **21 december 2023.**

Graphic design and layout: **Guspirah S.L.**

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**Suicidal behaviour occurs when the person sees no solution to their suffering.
Prevention can help the person envisage other ways out of their situation.**

Entering prison is a difficult juncture in life and a time of particular vulnerability, which increases the risk of suicide. It's normal for inmates to feel hopeless and have thoughts of self-harming or even wanting to end their own life.



THIS GUIDE OFFERS INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU RECOGNISE WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND IS AT RISK OF HARM AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT IT.

- FAMILIES AND FRIENDS ARE KEY TO SUICIDE PREVENTION.
- IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE, THERE'S NO NEED TO FEEL ASHAMED .
- SUICIDE CAN BE AVOIDED.

A person is at greater risk if...

- It's the first time they've been sent to prison.
- They have a long sentence, or their case has appeared in the media.
- They have lost contact with family or friends or suffered significant losses or changes (relationship breakdowns, family separation, deaths of loved ones, diagnosis with an illness, changes in the custody of children, separation from their mother at 3 years old...).
- There has been a change in their status under the law or penitentiary conditions or circumstances:
 - Transition to imprisonment.
 - Regression in prison regime category.
 - Increase in sentence time.
 - Deportation.
 - Transition to an open environment or access to parole.
 - Changes in penitentiary centre, wing, or resource.
- They have been placed in isolation.
- They have been discriminated against or suffered intimidation or assault in prison.
- They are experiencing or have experienced mental health issues.
- They have a previous history of suicidal behaviour.
- They are unable to speak or are struggling to speak the language.
- They have been subjected to sexual or gender-based violence and/or other forms of violence.



WARNING SIGNS

The following behaviours may indicate that the person's risk of suicide has increased:

- They talk about their future life with no sense of hope (for example: "My family would be better off without me", "There's no hope for me"...).
- They behave as if they were saying goodbye:
 - Giving away their belongings.
 - Writing farewell letters or saying goodbye to family members or friends.
 - Thanking both the other inmates and the staff at the prison.
- They stop taking care of themselves:
 - They stop taking their medication.
 - They neglect personal hygiene.
 - They become isolated or stop communicating with family and friends.
- They stop doing regular activities.
- They suddenly seem to be feeling much better for no apparent reason. This change of attitude can happen when the person has made the decision to commit suicide and believes that their suffering will soon be over.
- They begin to take uncharacteristic risks, as if unafraid of dying: driving at high speeds, drug abuse or other unusual high-risk behaviours.
- They appear sad and depressed during visits, calls or leave.
- They appear hyperactive or excessively euphoric.

SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS AND CONDUCT. HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

- 1. SUICIDAL BEHAVIOURS AND CONDUCT. HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?**
- 2. WHAT CAN I DO IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TRIES TO TAKE THEIR OWN LIFE?**
- 3. WHAT CAN I DO IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TAKES THEIR OWN LIFE?
DON'T BE AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE.**



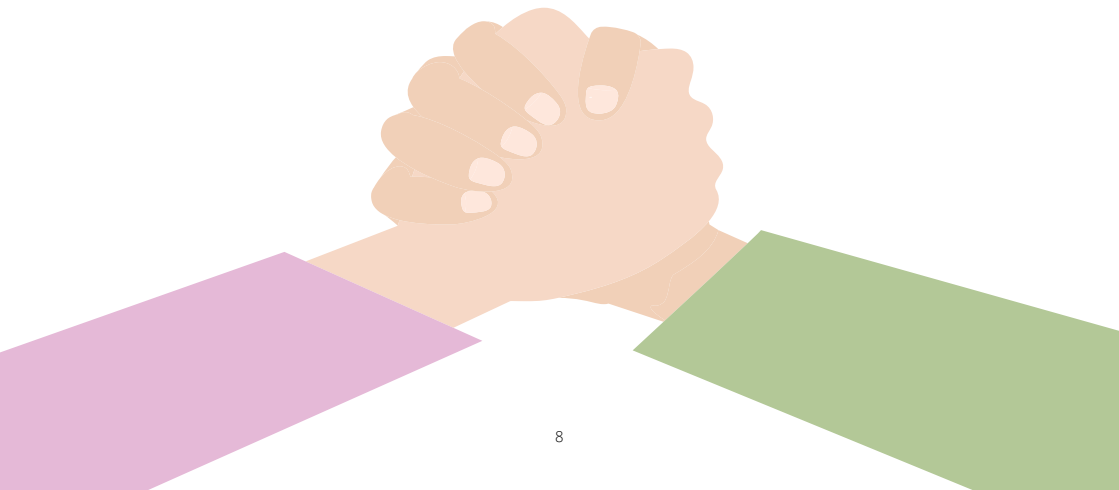
1. WHAT CAN I DO IF I KNOW A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND HAS HAD SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?



WHAT CAN I DO

At the time:

- Listen to the person, let them express themselves and be there for them. If possible, try not to leave them alone.
- Take it seriously. People who spend time thinking about suicide are more at risk of turning those thoughts into actions.
- Tell the people who work at the prison or resource you are in so that they can help you.
- If the person is very disturbed or has dangerous objects, remember to put your own safety first and ask for help from the people who work at the prison or resource you are in. If you are outside, you can call the emergency services (phone **112** or **061**).



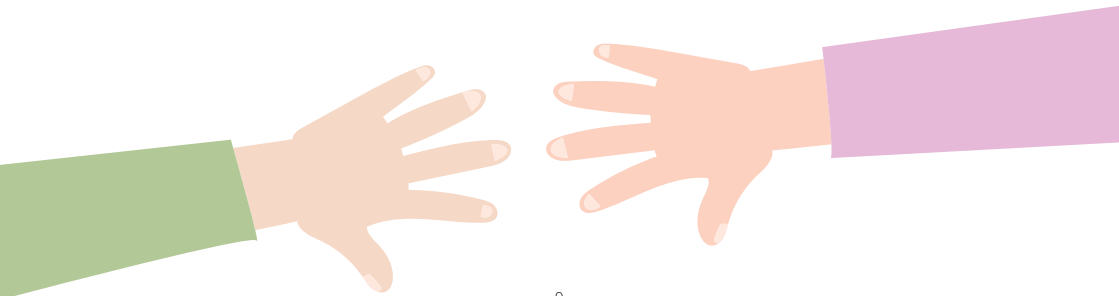
What can i do if i know a family member or friend has had suicidal thoughts?



WHAT CAN I DO

In the following days:

- Continue to look out for warning signs. For example, any failure to attend their regular activities or maintain their usual routine. Notify the people who work at the centre or resource you are in whenever you feel it is necessary.
- Try to keep in touch: take advantage of their calls to listen, use visits to offer support and write them letters. Contact with family and friends is extremely important for people who have been deprived of their liberty.
- Don't be afraid to talk about the suicidal thoughts if they need to.
- Remember, the professionals at the centre or resource are there to help if you need them. You can contact the designated social worker for advice, assistance and emotional support whenever you need it.
- You can also contact them for information about associations and helpful resources in the community.



2. WHAT CAN I DO IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TRIES TO TAKE THEIR OWN LIFE?



WHAT CAN I DO

At the time:

- Notify the people who work at the centre or resource you are in. If you are outside, call the emergency services (phone **112** or **061**).
- If the person is very disturbed or has dangerous objects, remember to put your own safety first.
- Do not leave them alone until someone comes to help you.

In the following days:

- Continue to look out for warning signs. For example, any failure to attend their regular activities or maintain their usual routine. Notify the people who work at the centre or resource you are in whenever you feel it is necessary.
- Try to keep in touch: take advantage of their calls to listen, use visits to offer support and write them letters. Contact with family and friends is extremely important for people who have been deprived of their liberty.
- Don't be afraid to talk about the suicidal thoughts if they need to.
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3. WHAT CAN I DO IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TAKES THEIR OWN LIFE?

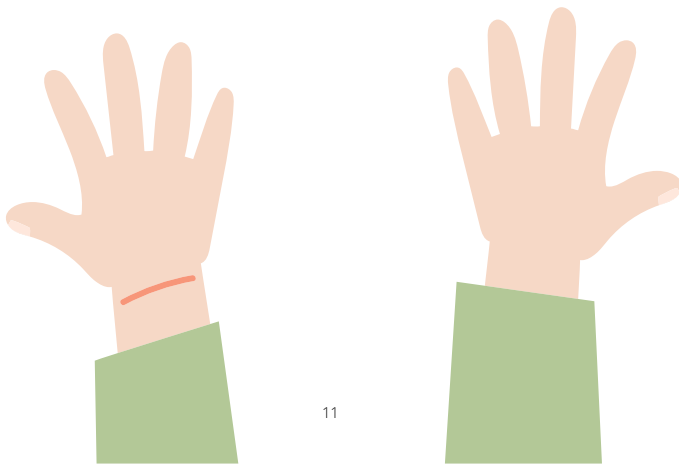
Losing a loved one to suicide can be devastating. In addition to sadness and grief, a death by suicide can generate many, sometimes contradictory feelings, such as guilt, unease, disbelief, anger and others. Because of the cause of death itself, suicide bereavement is different to other types of bereavement, and the process of managing your emotions and coming to terms with the loss may be more complex and drawn out.



WHAT CAN I DO

In the following days:

- Don't be afraid to share your feelings and ask for help whenever you need it.
- Remember that there are different services you can call for support, including your doctor, your primary care centre (CAP) and the other support services listed at the end of this guide.



People who experience a traumatic event such as a suicide attempt or death, often report:

- Finding it harder to sleep or having nightmares.
- Finding it harder to concentrate.
- Feeling more anxious or sad.
- Not feeling like doing things.
- Replaying the event in their mind.
- Losing their appetite or feeling unusually hungry.
- Suffering from headaches.

All of these reactions are normal following this type of experience and they will decrease in intensity as the days go by. However, if you find it hard to cope or they do not decrease over time, remember that you can always ask for help.





DON'T BE AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE

- It might not seem like it, but talking about suicide reduces the chance of it happening. It allows people who already have suicidal thoughts to share them and ask for help.
- People who have survived a suicide attempt say that what would have helped them the most at the time would have been not to feel alone, for someone to have asked them: "What's wrong?" or "How can I help you?".

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

- Listen. Sometimes, just listening is enough.
- Respect their emotions. Don't play down the significance of the emotions the person is feeling at that time. You might not share them, but you can try to understand how they feel.
- Remind them that professional support is available, both within the centre or resource and in the wider public health network. Let them know that they are not alone and that there are many people and services that can help them, as indicated at the end of this guide.
- Suicide is the method the person has found to bring an end to their suffering. Try not to judge; instead, understand that they must be suffering a lot if they are considering it.

WHAT SHOULD I NOT SAY?

- Avoid giving personal advice or assessments, for example: "It's not that serious", "You're not that bad"... What would work for you may not work for the other person.
- Don't make statements like: "Suicide is for brave/cowardly people". Suicide is the only way out that the person can envisage right now.



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF PENITENTIARY CENTRES OR OPEN CENTRES

If you have a friend or family member in a penitentiary centre (PC) and have noticed signs of high-risk behaviour, please use these telephone numbers to report it.

C.P. DONES DE BARCELONA: 93 225 08 84

CP JOVES: 93 693 41 20

CP QUATRE CAMINS: 93 842 24 61

CP BRIANS 1: 93 775 80 00

CP BRIANS 2: 93 693 50 00

CP LLEDONERS: 93 693 07 00

CP PONENT: 973 22 03 33

CP PUIG DE LES BASSES: 972 65 73 00

CP MAS D'ENRIC: 977 59 20 70

CP OBERT DE BARCELONA: 93 274 25 68

CP OBERT DE LLEIDA: 973 23 02 64

CP OBERT DE GIRONA: 972 48 70 07

CP OBERT DE TARRAGONA: 977 24 01 42

PAVELLÓ HOSPITALARI PENITENCIARI DE TERRASSA: 93 731 78 61

TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES OPERATING IN THE FIELD OF CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT

If you have a friend or family member on parole and have noticed signs of high-risk behaviour, please use these telephone numbers or the mobile number provided by the designated social worker to report it.

BARCELONA: 93 317 02 49/ 93 317 04 48

TARRAGONA: 977 23 30 34

LLEIDA: 973 24 22 04 08

GIRONA: 872975936



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

If find yourself in a critical situation or imminent danger.

EMERGÈNCIES: 112

EMERGÈNCIES MÈDIQUES: 061

HELPLINES

TELÈFON DE L'ESPERANÇA

anonymous and confidential emotional support: 93 414 48 48

TELÈFON DE PREVENCIÓ DEL SUÏCIDI

support for people with suicidal thoughts or in suicidal crisis; for people around the suicidal person (family members, friends, etc.) and for survivors who have lost a loved one to suicide: 900 925 555

SUPORT XAT JOVES

emotional support via WhatsApp for young people: 679 33 33 63

ENTITATS DE SUPERVIVENTS DE CATALUNYA

Organisations offering bereavement support and assistance after suicide

- **After Suicide – Association of Survivors (DSAS)**

Telephone: 662 545 199

WhatsApp: 666 640 665

- **Mans Amigues**

Telephone: 722 188 404

- **Catalan Association for the Prevention of Suicide (ACPS)**

Telephone: 623 30 04 55

A GUIDE TO PREVENTING SUICIDE IN THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

