

Identifying Suicide Risk

(v1.01 2018)

How to identify/screen

Identification of suicidal concerns in young people occurs through

- Use of SKS screening tools and asking directly if the young person has had thoughts of suicide.
- Observations of behaviour that may be warning signs (see Warning signs resource).
- Young person talking directly about suicide (“I want to kill myself”) or indirectly (“What’s the point in living”).
- Information from other people.

Who to screen

All young people in the Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children population are at higher risk for suicide compared to their non- welfare peers. The following groups within Oranga Tamariki have been identified as being at particular risk however:

- Young Maori women.
- Young people with a previous suicide attempt or self harm.
- Young people with a mental health diagnosis (including substance abuse).
- Youth Justice clients.
- Young people in periods of transition (including in and out of residence, between YJ and C&P, and discharge from Oranga Tamariki care).
- Young people excluded from school or chronic truants.

The above priorities are not intended to minimise the potential risk for other clients, rather it is to stress some groups are at particular risk. Clients who fit a number of the above categories are of the highest risk.

When to screen

NB.: this may be done with the SKS screening tools or through other methods mentioned above.

- When a young person first comes into Oranga Tamariki.
- If stressful events occur, including:
 - transitions (in and out of residence, YJ/C&P).
 - placement changes.
 - relationship difficulties.
 - court cases.
 - anniversaries (of deaths, birthdays, significant events).
- If you have any concerns about a young person’s mental wellbeing.
- Before closing a case.
- When there has been a suicide or suicide attempt other young people at risk should also be screened.

Remember – risk fluctuates so it is necessary to continue to monitor and screen young people.

What to do if risk is identified or suspected

- Refer to the TWB Programme:
 - Email help@twb.org.nz.
 - Contact the TWB Clinical Advisor in your area (contact details on the CASA web site - www.casa.org.nz).
- Enter a SKS, Suicide Risk Assessment or Suicide alert on CYRAS. (These will be reviewed by TWB Help Desk, there can be a delay in response to this however and it is not the recommended means of referral).
- Contact the mental health team in your area if there is a concern around immediate risk.