

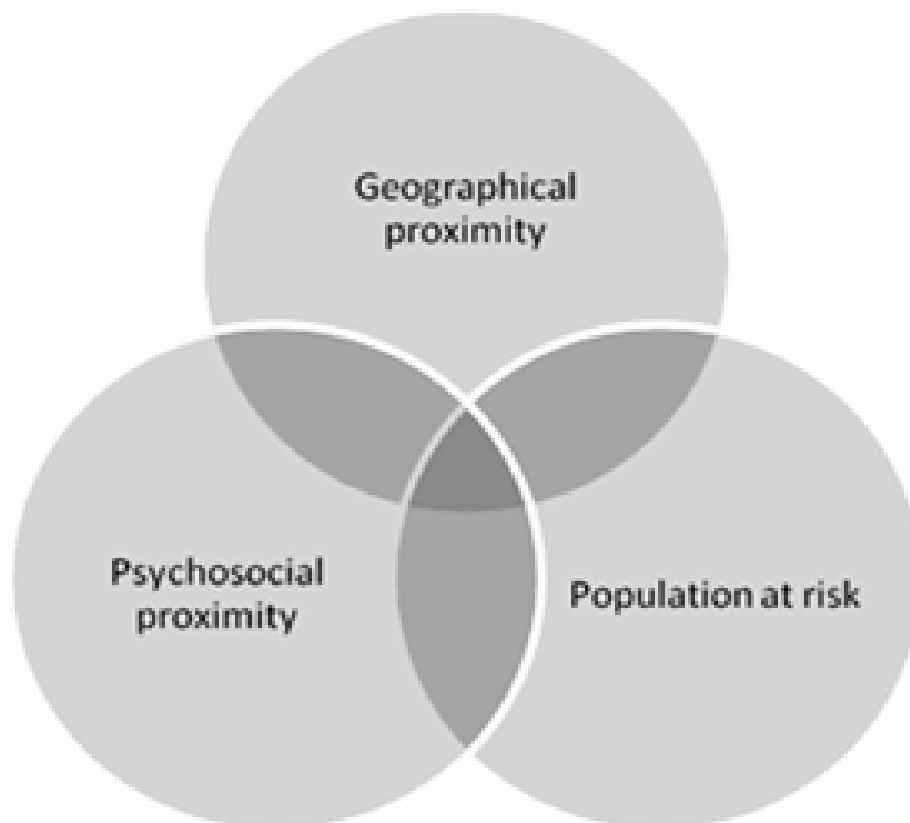
Screening Using Circles of Vulnerability

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A model for identifying individuals with increased vulnerability after a death by suicide

After a death by suicide (or suicide attempt), those impacted by the event may also be at increased vulnerability for developing a mental illness or engaging in suicidal behavior (often referred to as suicide contagion). It is important that potentially vulnerable individuals are identified, screened and that further assessment and intervention (grief and other support) is put in place as necessary.

CPRS uses the Circles of Vulnerability model to identify those who may be potentially more vulnerable to suicide contagion than others. This model advocates screening those who were in geographical or psychosocial proximity to the event and also a third general population, those already considered at risk of engaging in suicidal behavior prior to the event occurring.



Geographical Proximity

The physical distance a person is from the event location:

- Eyewitnesses to the event
- Those discovering a body
- Those exposed to the immediate aftermath of the event (including first responders)
- Those living in the same street, neighborhood or suburb where the event took place
- Those exposed to the event by virtue of extensive, repetitive and especially sensationalized media coverage including online and social media

Psychological Proximity

The level of identification with the deceased or person attempting suicide. For example:

- Victims of bullying
- Team members
- Class mates or others attending the same school
- Those in the same peer group or other social “gang” or group or who perceive they are a similar person in some way to deceased or person attempting suicide
- Those who perceive they have similar life problems to the deceased (or person attempting suicide) which could also be resolved by suicide

Social Proximity

The relationship one has with the deceased or person attempting suicide

- Family members
- Friends
- Romantic partner or interest
- Ex-romantic relationship
- Part of the same peer group or social circle
- Health or other professionals who had been working with the deceased

Those most vulnerable tend not to be the best friends of the deceased

Population at risk

Those with:

- Current mental illness
- A history of trauma
- Prior suicidal behaviour especially previous suicide attempt(s)
- Current substance abuse

- Current familial conflict or other relationship distress
- A history of familial suicide(s) or other suicidal behaviour
- A history of peer / friend suicide

Those most at risk

Those who:

- Witnessed the suicide or its aftermath (Geographical)
- Had a psychological or social connection to deceased (Psychosocial)
- Have pre-existing vulnerabilities (Population at risk)
- Helped the suicide occur or believe that they could or should have done something to prevent it

Other factors contributing to increased vulnerability are those who:

- Believe that they failed to identify signs of suicidal intent
- Are feeling any sense of responsibility for the death
- Have a sense of hopelessness/helplessness
- Have experienced recent (or have upcoming) significant losses or stressors
- Have limited social support

See also:

- CASA's CPRS Contagion and Adolescents
- CASA's CPRS Identifying Suicidal Concern in Children and Adolescents

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