

Increase suicide safety with screening and assessment

Forty-five percent of people who die by suicide had [contact with their primary care provider in the month before death](#). Primary care provider screening and assessment increases suicide treatment and prevention by [10-50 percent](#), depending on the age group. Primary care providers have an opportunity to make a difference.

Screening and assessment tools

Providers can use a combination of the tools below to meet the needs of a particular setting or the individual being assessed.

- [The Patient Health Questionnaire \(PHQ\)](#): A 3 or 9 question screening that is a strong predictor of suicide risk. This screening can be completed during intake and followed up with a full assessment as needed.
- [The Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale \(C-SSRS\)](#): This tool screens through a series of simple questions. It is highly researched and shows strong effectiveness. The answers help identify whether someone is at risk for suicide, determine the severity and immediacy of that risk, and gauge the level of support that the person needs. A free online training for C-SSRS tools is available at [The Columbia Lighthouse Project](#).
- [The SAFE-T Assessment](#): This is thorough assessment of thoughts and behaviors that provides a framework for clinicians to explore suicidal ideation with clients and gather important data points. [Order reminder cards](#) with an easy-to-follow guideline for clinicians.

How to approach an assessment interview from [Zero Suicide](#)

- Have a collaborative approach, with empathy and genuineness.
- Let them know you understand the pain they are in.
- Engender confidence that there is an alternative to alleviating that pain and that the patient can be empowered to use care and services to do so.
- Provide [988 Crisis Line](#) information to patients and direct clinic information when possible.
- Caring contacts should be used for those who do not want to continue engagement with treatment. Caring contacts are non-demanding contacts reminding clients that they are not forgotten even when they decline continued treatment.

Additional Health Care Authority suicide prevention resources are available [here](#).