

suicide AWARENESS & PREVENTION



Vanessa Kedl, M.Ed., LPC (MN), LAPC (ND) | The Village Family Service Center

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

The month of September is recognized as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month which holds a spotlight on a mental health challenge that is often behind closed doors. To create a more open dialogue and break the stigma, we can learn to recognize some of the warning signs.

SUICIDAL IDEATION

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts about suicide or death. These thoughts can affect people of all ages and backgrounds and vary greatly from person to person. Someone may experience thoughts about death without wanting to act on them, while others may experience more specific thoughts about suicide or develop a plan. Suicidal ideation is often described in two broad categories:

Passive suicidal ideation may involve thoughts such as wishing you could go to sleep and not wake up, wishing you were dead, or imagining what it would be like not to be alive. These thoughts may occur without a specific plan or intention to harm yourself. Even when thoughts are passive, they are important to take seriously and can be a sign that additional support is needed.

Active suicidal ideation involves more specific thoughts about suicide and may include an intention to act or the development of a plan.

CREATING A SAFETY PLAN

A safety plan is a personalized tool that can help someone navigate moments when suicidal thoughts become overwhelming. A mental health professional can help create one based on individual needs and circumstances.

A safety plan may include:

- Warning signs that indicate someone may be experiencing a crisis
- Coping strategies and activities that can help get through difficult moments
- People to contact for support
- Places that feel safe or where they can connect with others
- Professional and crisis resources to contact
- Emergency steps to take if there is an immediate danger

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, support is available 24/7 through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. If you are in immediate danger or need emergency medical assistance, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Remember: You don't need to wait until things feel unbearable to ask for help. Reaching out is a sign of strength, and support is available. The Village's Employee Assistance Program can help individuals address concerns such as stress, anxiety, depression, grief, relationship challenges, and other personal issues before they reach a crisis point.